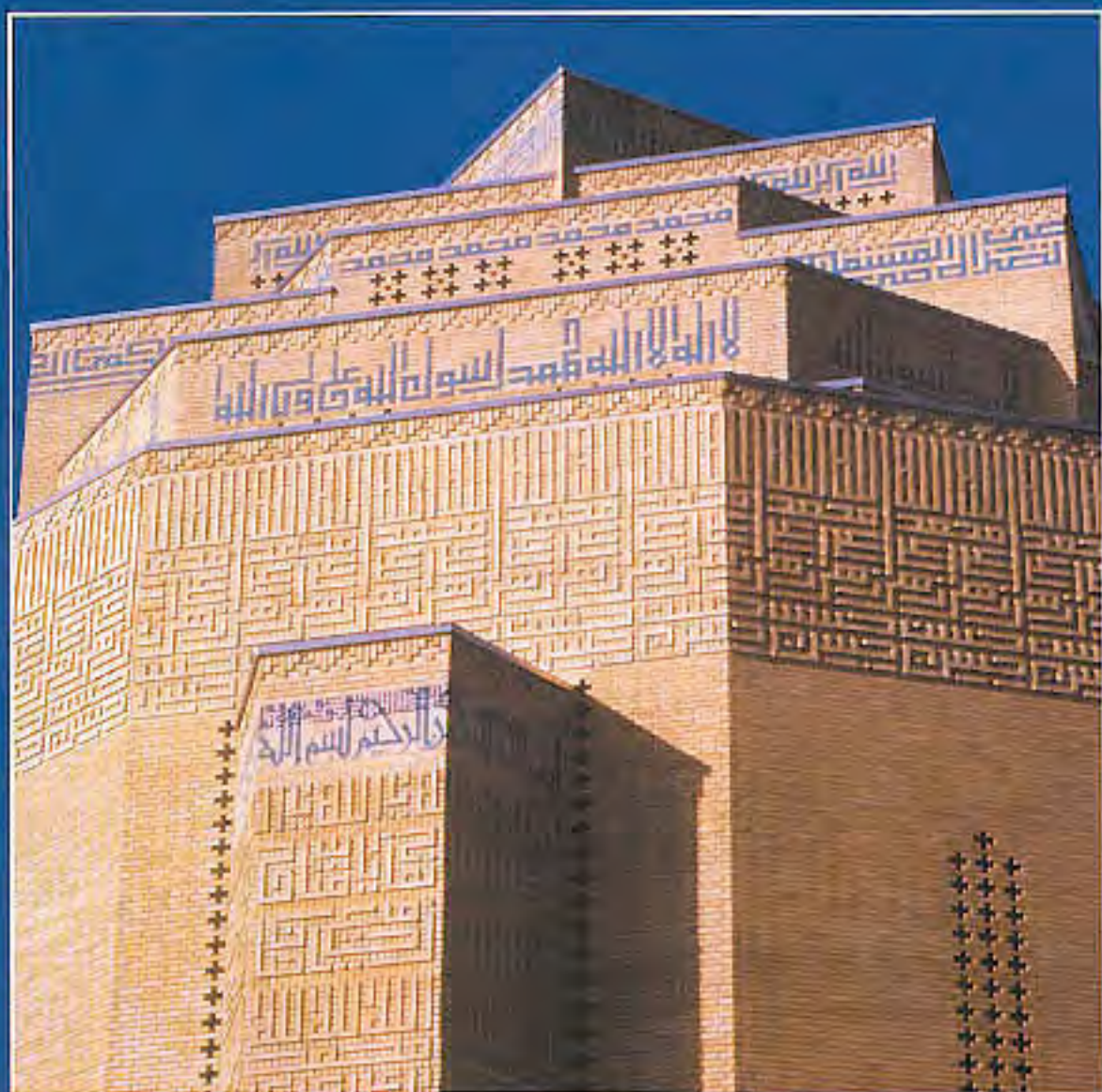


# EXPRESSIONS OF ISLAM IN BUILDINGS



Exploring Architecture in Islamic Cultures

# EXPRESSIONS OF ISLAM IN BUILDINGS

Proceedings of an International Seminar  
Sponsored by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture and  
The Indonesian Institute of Architects  
Held in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
15-19 October 1990

Published by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture on behalf of  
The Aga Khan Award for Architecture

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## Foreword

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This volume records the proceedings of the International Seminar *Contemporary Expressions of Islam in Buildings* held in Indonesia in October 1990. The opening ceremony took place in the Jakarta State Palace, while the seminar proper was held in the historic city of Yogyakarta.

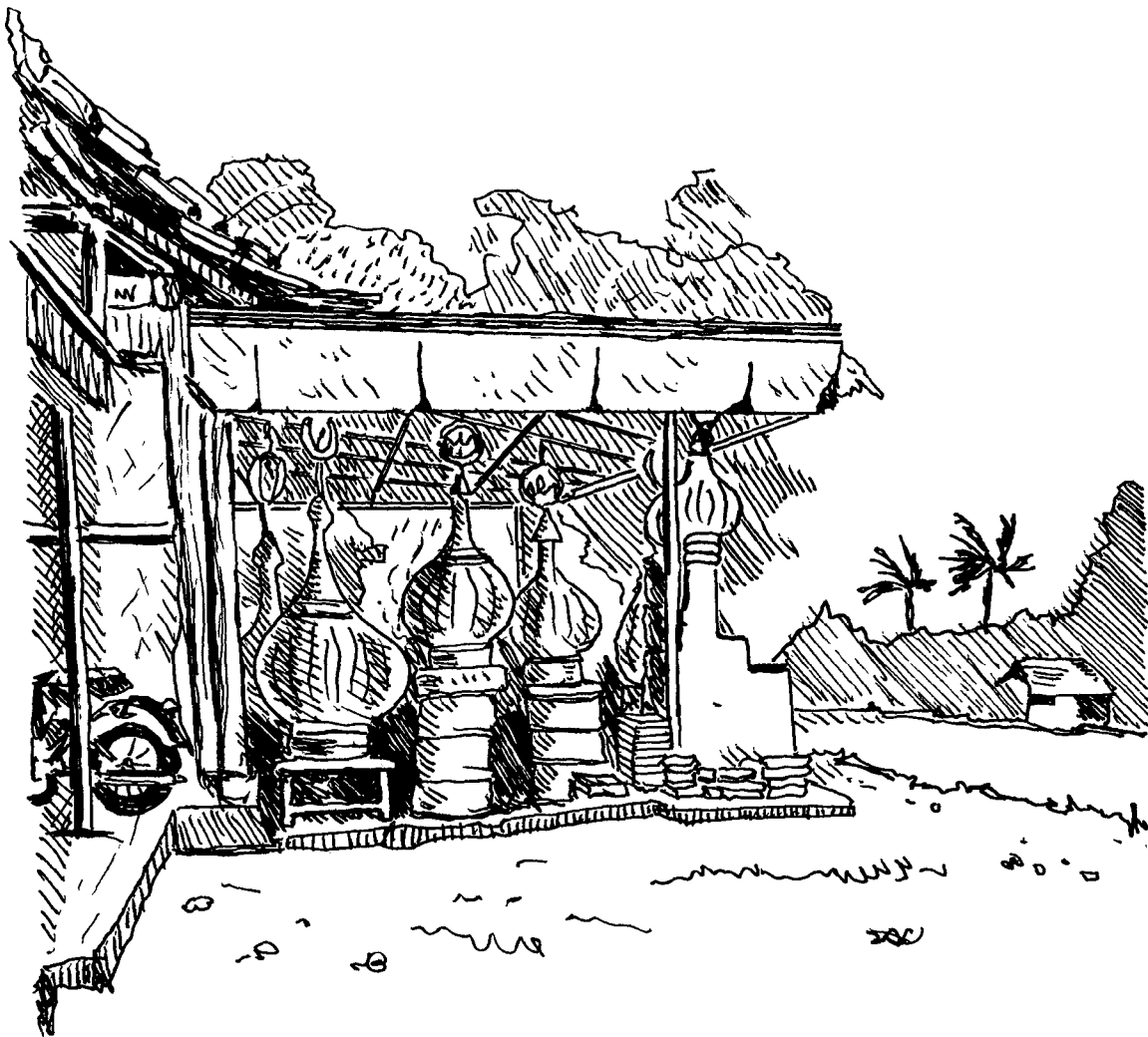
Throughout the seminar, the position papers and ensuing comments and discussions focused on a key theme: the exploration of the interaction between Islam, as a social and cultural phenomenon, and the built environment of Muslims. The specific topics addressed included a wide range from the more expected themes of tradition versus modernity or the architecture of the mosque to the less frequently studied but equally important topics of women and architecture and Muslims in the West.

From the opening speeches in Jakarta to the last farewell in Yogyakarta, two key concepts dominated the seminar and left a lasting imprint on the participants: the need for *ijtihad* or innovation in all our endeavours and the “tolerance” evident in Indonesia as an example to other nations. Certainly, the Indonesian dimension of the seminar enriched all present, both through formal contributions and through visual stimulation.

All participants left with the feeling of having learned and profited from the discussions. It is to be hoped that these published recordings will convey not only the information accumulated but also some sense of the interaction of ideas and arguments that took place. As in past volumes of the series, priority has been given in this publication to the excitement of the deliberations and the spontaneity of the debates, even if at times this had to be done at the expense of syntax and grammar. In this way the reader will be better able to share in the seminar experience.

The diversity of the contributions and the constraints of time and space have made the editing of this volume a challenging if not always easy task. Françoise Lombard and Danielle Chouet deserve special thanks for their unfailing optimism while typing and retyping the many versions and revisions.

Hayat Salam  
Editor



# The Issues

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## **Integration and Interaction in Islamic Culture**

*Syahrul Syarif*

Chairman, Indonesian Institute of Architects

## **Religion, Diversity, and National Development**

*His Excellency Soeharto*

President, Republic of Indonesia

## **Faith, Tradition, Innovation, and the Built Environment**

*His Highness the Aga Khan*

Opening Ceremony

The State Palace

Jakarta, 15 October 1990

## **Integration and Interaction in Islamic Culture**

*Syahrul Syarif*

Chairman, Indonesian Institute of Architects

I would like to express our deep gratitude to His Excellency the President of the Republic of Indonesia, for inaugurating this International Seminar, *Contemporary Expressions of Islam in Buildings*, conducted with the cooperation of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture and the Indonesian Institute of Architects. This cooperation is a continuation of a long relationship established not only with the Indonesian Institute of Architects but also with Indonesian scholars and statesmen by means of seminar participation, Master Jury membership, and consultancy. With five Aga Khan Awards received in the last four cycles, Indonesia is also listed as one of the top countries in terms of Awards received.

Your Highness, on behalf of the Indonesian Institute of Architects, I would like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome you to Indonesia and to express our appreciation for your presence at this important architecture seminar. Likewise, to all participants who have come from outside Indonesia, I would also like to extend my best and warmest greetings and sincere wish that you will enjoy your stay in Indonesia, especially since next year is a special one for Indonesia, it being "Visit Indonesia Year".

I am happy to report that this seminar will be attended by approximately one hundred and thirty participants from different parts of the world. They have been selected because of their expertise and professions, rather than because of their nationality or creed. The seminar is scheduled to last for four days, starting 16 October, and will be conducted in Yogyakarta, which is one of the cities in Indonesia possessing a rich and evocative history and cultural development.

During the seminar, the participants will be given the opportunity to visit several buildings and built environments where Islam has successfully blended into the local culture, such as Kampung Kauman, Kampung Ledok Ratmakan, Mesjid Agung or the Great Mosque, and Kota Gede.

The seminar is geared to review, collect, and compare several examples of the integration and interaction of Islamic faith by the people and followers into everyday architectural buildings and built environments in several parts of the world. The seminar will then study how the numerous differences and similarities have become a wonderful string of world culture, especially of Islamic culture.

As a country where the majority of its people embrace Islam, and where the number of Islam's followers is the greatest compared with people of other countries in the world, Indonesia is indeed a most interesting country to observe, especially as a country where Islam has beautifully and harmoniously interacted with and become incorporated into an indispensable part of the people's traditions and culture. For the benefit of the seminar, it is especially interesting to study how this interaction has moulded the architecture and built environments where the ordinary people spend their daily lives.

For us, architects of Indonesia, this seminar is of special interest in that it becomes part of our activities commemorating the fortieth year of formal architectural education in Indonesia, which takes place this year, in 1990. I have deliberately emphasized the word “formal” because prior to the introduction of such education, the Indonesian people have for a long time known “informal education in architecture”, which has given birth to so many great architects who have created many great architectural works.

It is therefore our sincerest hope that this seminar will complement the review of our forty years of architectural education, which has produced so many architectural works of importance. It is within this spirit that we are now paying serious attention to sharpening our awareness and appreciation in the fields of documentation, study, and preservation of those architectural works that have enriched and enhanced our culture. That should become the torch and guiding light for our future works.

Finally, I would like to extend my sincerest appreciation to the Minister of Religious Affairs and his entire staff for their guidance, advice, and support in this event.

I now humbly invite Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Indonesia to present his address and to simultaneously declare officially open this International Seminar on Architecture.



## Religion, Diversity, and National Development

*His Excellency Soeharto*

President, Republic of Indonesia

It is a distinct pleasure for me to receive Your Highness the Aga Khan and delegates to the International Seminar entitled *Contemporary Expressions of Islam in Buildings* in the State Palace this morning. I would like also to extend my warmest welcome to Indonesia to Your Highness the Aga Khan and all participants coming from abroad who will have the opportunity to visit our country by attending the seminar.

Indonesia is highly honoured to be selected for the second time to host the seminar sponsored by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. Moreover, this organization has presented a number of awards to Indonesia's architectural and development achievements linked with education. These are integrated with efforts to improve the environmental quality of the surrounding society; to develop various infrastructures aimed at the betterment of the living conditions of the poor; to encourage people's participation in building business establishments without sacrificing aesthetic values; and to present new traditional elements in line with the contemporary function of architecture.

I am highly appreciative of Your Highness' initiative and efforts to promote the appreciation of the cultural perception of Islam in architecture through the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. As far as we are concerned, Islam consists both of a religion and a civilization. Islam does not flourish in an environment where there is a cultural vacuum. Consequently, the evolution of the thinking and civilization of Muslims is closely associated with the environment, history, and culture. The topics selected for the present seminar clearly illustrate the wide-ranging scope of architectural works. Basically, they represent the harmonious manifestation of the science, art, philosophy, and environment of a community.

Islam peacefully came to and grew in our country. I believe it is worthy to note that the propagators of Islam have shown extreme wisdom during the early periods. They succeeded in infusing the spirit of Islam into the cultural expressions of the local communities, thus avoiding cultural conflicts. This is evidenced by the traditions, arts, and built environment of our Muslim communities. And this process continues today.

We are a religious nation. We are proud of and pleased by this fact. This is also clearly shown by the development we are currently carrying out in earnest.

During more than these last two decades, our nation has been grappling with development. In its implementation, we have drawn up our development plans with clear goals and stages. We have been carrying out our first twenty-five-year, long-term development stage since 1969. In the first twenty-five-year period, we are determined to change the economic structure from an agrarian-oriented one to a more balanced state. We hope that after twenty-five years of sustained and uninterrupted development we shall embark on a take-

off era, namely, an era when we aim to carry development out on our own in order to create our ideal society.

In its implementation, the responsibility rests entirely on our nation's shoulders. This implies that development is not merely in the hands of the Government but that the people themselves are also active, especially through social organizations. The ultimate goal is to build a complete Indonesian being and to develop the whole of the Indonesian society. We are aiming at the creation of a just and prosperous society founded on *Pancasila*, our state philosophy, and, at the same time, our national identity. *Pancasila* is the complete unity of our nation's five basic principles, namely: Belief in One God; Just and Civilized Humanitarianism; Unity of Indonesia; Democracy led by the wisdom of deliberations among representatives; and Social Justice for the whole of the Indonesian people.

We have noticed from the development experience of advanced societies that the fulfilment of physical needs alone is not enough. In fact, the fulfilment of more material demands sometimes makes this life more barren, unfriendly, and cruel. If such is the case, we will not attain prosperity and happiness but, on the contrary, restlessness. For this reason, therefore, we have conscientiously made the promotion of religious life part of our national development plan. On the other hand, we are also well aware that we cannot improve the quality of life without taking into account our diversity.

It is therefore not surprising that in Indonesia, the mosque, for example, not only functions as a place of worship but also serves as a centre for congregation. It is a place where education, social services, and women's and youth activities are conducted. Although these new buildings may show certain innovations and creativities in their physical appearance, the religious aspects are not entirely overlooked. The means for worship are always provided to Muslims. The spiritual needs of man are too precious to be neglected.

I hope that the seminar we are opening this morning will enrich the horizons of our architects because their profession is not restricted to a nation's physical culture, but to its spiritual dimensions as well. Their creativity is being challenged to design architectural works relevant to the functions and demands of a modern life, without uprooting their national culture and spirit. I believe the monumental nature of an architectural masterpiece is not only determined by its grandeur, but by its depth.

In conclusion, by praying to The One God for His continued blessings on all of us and by saying *Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*, I hereby declare the International Seminar entitled *Contemporary Expressions of Islam in Buildings*, officially open.

My best wishes for a successful seminar.

## Faith, Tradition, Innovation, and the Built Environment

*His Highness the Aga Khan*

That at this time of world tension and economic apprehension, we are gathered here today in Jakarta, in the presence of His Excellency the President of the Republic and so many distinguished guests, to debate one of the most sensitive, difficult, and permanent issues of our built environment, is symbolic of much of what the world admires in Indonesia. The peace, the purposeful sense of direction, and the right to think freely about issues of faith are but some of the qualities of Indonesian life which we hope will also characterize our seminar. Your Excellency, thank you for having accepted to open it, and to your Government and the Indonesian Institute of Architects, thank you for making it possible.

A decade ago we met here, in one of the first seminars organized by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, to strive together to define the themes and directions that this nascent endeavour was to embrace. It is from meetings such as those, that the vision that animates the Award has taken shape. Our discussions then dealt with Housing, and from their contributions, one of the pillars of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture took shape: the Award's abiding concern with the built environment of *all* Muslims, including the many millions of the poor, whose environmental concerns are beyond the domain of conventional architectural practice, and whose plight all too easily escapes the attention of those who could make a difference. Indonesia's pioneering programmes of community building and kampung improvements were to win several Aga Khan Awards for Architecture and are today fully recognized as major achievements in an area which many thought intractable. Indeed, Indonesia as a whole has shown a remarkable capacity to combine growth with equity. Its great achievement in reducing poverty from about 60 percent a generation ago, to less than 18 percent today is a dazzling achievement that should serve as a source of pride and encouragement for many parts of the world that are desperately struggling with similar problems.

That the Award should have adopted this socially conscious vision is a manifestation of its profound adherence to the universal values of Islam. For what would our architectural concerns be, if they were void of compassion for the poor and of commitment to their cause? We would have retreated to a sterile formalistic debate about the elements of architectural styles, not an active concern with the built environment of living societies.

Thus, the Award's vision was deeply affected by our discussions in Indonesia a decade ago. Through four cycles and forty-eight prizes, through a dozen seminars and countless meetings along the length and breadth of the Muslim world, we have striven to promote a certain vision of architecture and the built environment. Cultural adaptation, an authentic resonance for the societies served, honouring the legacy of the past, but looking to the future, those are important convictions that we hold today. But there are also others: to encompass the rural and the urban, the old and the new, the

permanent and the changing, all those constituencies that are bound in the common web of human relations that constitute the rich and intricate mosaic of today's Muslim societies.

The essence of the Aga Khan Award is to premiate outstanding quality in all principal aspects of the built environment for Muslims. We seek to identify excellence in landscaped spaces, restored buildings, social housing, high-tech constructions, and others, all over the world. The single binding theme is that the buildings or spaces be essentially used for those born into, or who have become a part of, the faith of Islam.

It is a broad and glorious domain that we have defined. The invisible common thread that runs through it all, the “underlying theme” of that great design, is relevance to the common characteristic of being — in some way — related specially to Muslims.

We have returned to Indonesia to grapple with that concept. It is indeed fitting that we should come to the largest Muslim country in the world to take stock of past achievements and to measure future challenges, in terms of the “thematic identity” of our endeavour, the link between Islam and building. For if the search for excellence starts with relevance, authenticity, and striking vibrant resonances in the communities concerned, surely we cannot forestall tackling the issue of that elusive link between the spiritual and the temporal that makes Muslim societies as diverse as Morocco and Indonesia fashion their environments in manners that speak to their Muslim cultural and spiritual being.

In this seminar, the Award strives to look to the fountainhead of inspiration on which Muslims and non-Muslims draw to create the spaces and buildings we admire. What aspects of the social or religious backgrounds transpire into their creation? Is it their interpretation of their faith? Is it the ethic of their faith? Is it the rules of social conduct of their faith? And, indeed, the hard question has to be asked, is it their faith at all?

How do they perceive problems of scale, intimacy, regionalism? How do they choose materials, textures, and colours? What use do they make of water, flowers, and scent? Do they relate one or some, all or none, of these considerations to their faith, or to their ethic, or to a secular tradition? Is the secularization of the modern Western world affecting their professional approach, or, on the contrary, is the search for an Islamic identity encouraging them to learn much more about their history and tradition than what their forefathers knew or learnt? If there is a return to the essence of their background, is it in the form of a search for identity, or is it in the form of a new commitment to their faith?

These are the questions of a “living faith” — a living faith that manifests itself in a myriad of ways, from the lowliest, smallest corner stall in a market, to the inspired grandeur of stately congregational mosques and public buildings which define landmarks and articulate urban spaces, with the many, many in-between.

To address these issues, we have to set them up against a broader, global canvas of which the Muslim culture is an integral part. The worldwide movements of societies in flux, oscillating between secularism and ostentatious religious practice — alternating between strident advocacy and quiet determination, between spiritual hunger and the pursuit of material wealth, with people everywhere reaffirming their right to be themselves, to express themselves in terms of their beliefs, their culture, their aspirations.

Architecture speaks to these manifest needs with buildings that unite communities with spiritual bonds and shared identity.

The congregational mosque, as the traditional centre of community life, plays an important part in this vision, but it is by no means the only relevant structure to be considered here. Even though the symbolic content of Mosque Architecture is so powerful that it plays a dominant role in any taxonomy of the architectural vocabulary of Muslim societies, it remains one, albeit very important, component of the spectrum with which we are concerned here. Thus our seminar is far more than a discussion of the architecture of the contemporary mosque. It really addresses the profound interaction between faith and the environment, between a society's deep cultural and ethical structure, and the best manifestation of its creative talent, those structures and spaces that speak most directly to the people's needs and articulate most eloquently their hopes, their aspirations, and their common identity.

Such architecture is not created in a vacuum. It draws upon sources of inspiration from the legacies of the past, the promise of the present, and the inspired visions of talented individuals. Yet it operates within technological and economic constraints that define the space of possible solutions.

Designers of genius are those who have managed to extend that space of possible solutions and to convince the populations concerned of the appropriateness of the solutions that have pushed back the boundaries of the acceptable. Innovations, by getting accepted, expand the domain of the ordinary. But innovations, to be accepted, must be rooted in a profound knowledge of self and of society and its needs if they are not to be mere artifice or caprice. Such knowledge of society and its needs requires an understanding of history and religion as much as of sociology, politics, or economics. Without such a wellspring of knowledge to draw upon, the inspiration of the designers is likely to promote an impoverished vision and produce a pedestrian output.

We can, to be sure, question this font of self-knowledge and seek to define the elusive "divine spark" that ignites the genius of a Sinan. But to understand the nature of inspiration for a society as a whole requires profound self-knowledge. Thus, there is no escape from holding up a truthful mirror to ourselves and to start from there.

If we are to address the question of the nature of inspiration in design in architecture, and the interfacing between the faith and

ethic of Islam and its physical expression, I do not really see how we can reasonably beg the corollary question as to what needs to be known about Islam by architects and builders in order to create within the language of their own religious and ethical background.

This is also part of the task that we have set ourselves in this seminar. Like all our Award activities, this inquiry should be open, candid, and far-reaching, undertaken in “a space of freedom”. For a profound and critical self-examination is indeed in order, that we may build the exemplars of tomorrow, and help shape the built environment of future generations, in a manner befitting the needs of today’s societies and tomorrow’s dreams.



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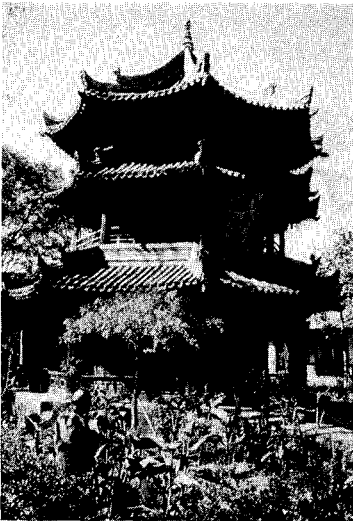
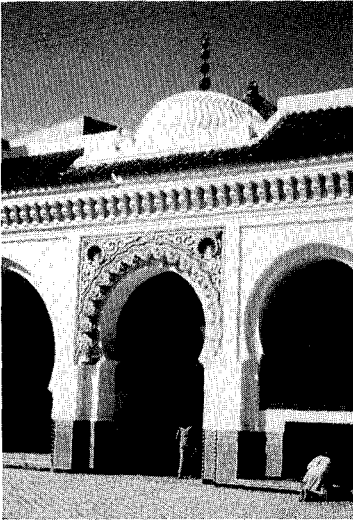
**Contemporary Expressions of Islam in Buildings:  
The Religious and the Secular**  
*Ismail Serageldin*

**Comments**  
*Aziz Esmail*  
*Mohammad al-Asad*

**Discussion**  
*Yuswadi Saliya, Ismail Serageldin, Achmad Noe'man,  
Mohammed Arkoun, Kemas Madani, Ismail Serageldin,  
Aziz Esmail, Jale Erzen, Dogan Kuban, Ali Shuaibi,  
Mohammad al-Asad, Aziz Esmail, Hayat Salam, Kemas  
Madani, Akhmad Fanani, Mohammad Danisworo,  
Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim, Yuswadi Saliya, Abdelhalim I.  
Abdelhalim, Arif Hasan, Hasan-Uddin Khan, Mohammed  
Arkoun, Ismail Serageldin*

## Contemporary Expressions of Islam in Buildings: The Religious and the Secular

*Ismail Serageldin*



*Mosques in Morocco (top) and  
China (above)  
Photographs: H.-U. Khan/AKAA;  
C. Little/AKAA.*

The topic of this seminar is vast. This introductory paper intends to examine contemporary expressions of Islam in buildings. The choice of plurals (“expressions”, “buildings”) is intentional. It is not just a single expression of a single idealized Islam that concerns us. Rather, it is “Islam” as a system of beliefs, as an articulator of values, as a key agent in the formulation of socio-cultural identity, and social and political force, and as a wellspring of spiritual strength and inspiration that is intended. And because these multidimensional manifestations vary from country to country and from region to region, we are dealing with a complex set of realities. Furthermore, these realities are viewed through a prismatic crystal that brings to bear history, myth, and value-laden symbolism. It is a difficult task indeed to disentangle so many elements to arrive at “a truthful image”. So let us be realistic enough to talk of expressions rather than just “Islam”.

We have, by the nature of our field of endeavour, limited the range of expressions considered to those related to building. But, in this introductory paper, it is perhaps better to emphasize “buildings”, for building as a social function, as process, and as an end-product is also a vast domain. To do so will enable us to look at some architectural examples and to try to relate them to the forces at work in contemporary expressions of Islam, and to find manifestations of those expressions in the examples provided.

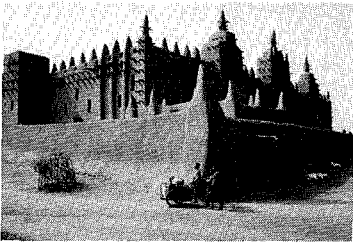
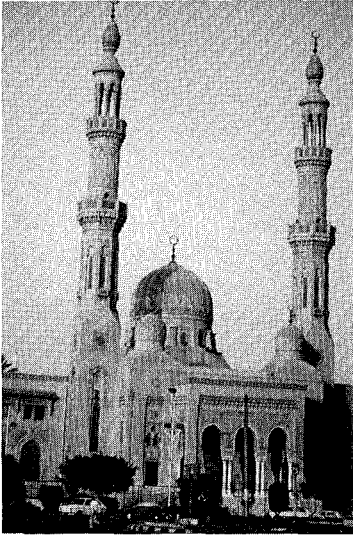
With these caveats, it is pertinent to look at some of the questions involved:

- The spiritual and the temporal in contemporary Muslim societies;
- Some societal issues, to provide the context for the discussion of architectural examples;
- The changing function of the mosque in relation both to other buildings and to the changing societal context;
- The symbolism of mosque architecture, which remains paramount even though our concerns transcend mosque architecture;
- Some notable contemporary projects that illustrate the points raised in the preceding sets of issues;
- The identification of patterns and trends in the architectural examples; and,
- The definition of a summative framework to capture (in matrix form) the interactions between the socio-cultural and the architectural.

From such an overview, the unfolding programme of the seminar can be better seen as the systematic filling in of the different facets of the vast domain we will have just barely identified.

### **Background: The Spiritual in Contemporary Muslim Societies**

Muslim societies, in the throes of rapid modernization, are being buffeted by major changes in demographic structure, rural-urban



*The tremendous variability of the physical manifestations of the architecture of Muslim societies is evidenced in these examples of mosques from Morocco, China (preceding page), Egypt (top), and Mali (above). Trying to find surface commonalities between such diverse structures misses the point when seeking the very real, though subtle, common thread that makes them part of the broader whole that defines the architecture of Muslim societies.*

*Photographs: Archives AKAA;  
S. Basak/AKAA*

balance, productive economic base, and established social order. Extremely rapid urbanization, population growth, and a revolution in transport and telecommunications have all contributed to an unprecedented socio-cultural ferment in the two generations that have taken charge of the independent Muslim world.

To these trends, one must also add an evolving notion of cultural identity, which has been badly shaken by the experience of the last thirty years. Secularization and modernity, both ill-defined concepts only vaguely understood by the elites, were widely embraced as the prevailing ethos of the newly independent Muslim societies, with the possible exceptions of Pakistan, whose very foundation was its Islamic identity, and the Arabian peninsula, whose history and cultural evolution represent a very special case in the Muslim world. But that ethos is now ebbing, and a powerful new tide is rising, calling for a “return to traditional values”, and emphasizing spiritual values versus crass materialism. Unfortunately, the new tide is mostly being channelled in a very dogmatic, narrow-minded, if not obscurantist, direction.

Where do the intellectuals of the Muslim world stand in the context of this major interplay of cultural currents and ideas?

This must be the starting point for treating the issues of the spiritual and the temporal in the built environment of Muslim societies today. It is also the key to understanding the architecture of the mosque in contemporary Muslim societies, as well as specific manifestations of other building types, since the cultural milieu is the essential framework within which this set of issues must be addressed.

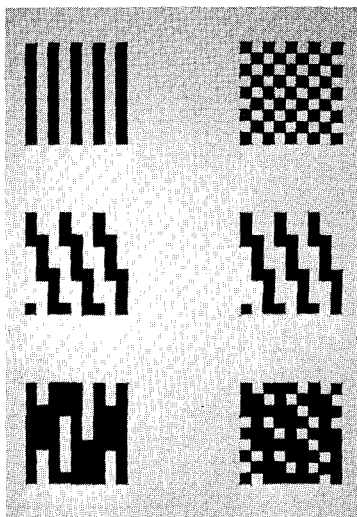
The seminar discussions would greatly benefit from a common understanding of some key concepts, ideas, and terms, including modernity, tradition, secular, spiritual, sacred, profane, etc. Our speakers are therefore invited to be precise in the manner in which they use these terms and constructs.

As well, our discussions should progress with the following questions in mind:

- What are the differences between the characteristics of the spiritual functions of Islam as a religion and Islam as a culture and social identity in today’s Muslim societies?
- What is the role of the spiritual in the built environment of contemporary Muslim societies?
- What is the role of the mosque, as an institution and as a symbol, in the twin currents of spiritual rejuvenation and societal identity?
- What is the manifestation of the preceding factors in the changing patterns of the architecture of Muslim societies today?

### **Some Societal Issues**

In order to put the discussion of the architectural examples (especially those of the mosque) into a societal context, it is pertinent to address some of the following issues:



*Local non-Islamic characteristics owing to climatic, geographic, traditional, or other reasons can be very diverse, as exemplified symbolically by the two top diagrams. Combining a subtle overlay that Islam brings (symbolized by the common middle diagram) with the originals results in two different-looking outcomes (symbolized by the two bottom diagrams). Those who try to compare only the final appearance of the two bottom diagrams may find nothing in common between them — as do many observers who limit their review of the architecture of Muslim societies only to the physical manifestations of the buildings. Yet the common thread (middle diagram) is certainly there and indeed contributes much to the final outcome.*

*Diagram: I. Serageldin*

- The role of Islam in society's definition of self, and whether it differs among the various social classes;
- The changing social functions of the mosque and its place in the socio-cultural fabric of the various communities of the country;
- The links to the past as cultural and artistic sources of legitimacy and inspiration for action;
- The role of the state and local communities in organizing mutual support systems and in funding and building mosques. These issues of sponsorship are important in understanding some of the architectural as well as socio-political manifestations of the phenomena at hand.
- The degree to which the presumed dichotomy of "modernity" and "tradition" is relevant to the preceding issues;
- The degree to which the social culture is integrated and capable of adopting, adapting, and integrating new external elements;
- The symbols, if any, that are meaningful to different social groups and their evolution through time.

The existence of communities of Muslims in the West introduces special issues in this general discussion. The identity of these Muslims is severely at risk, as their adopted lands, with their extremely powerful cultural influences, seek directly or indirectly to absorb and assimilate them. The maintenance of a sense of self and community, especially among the second and third generations of immigrants, poses a real challenge.

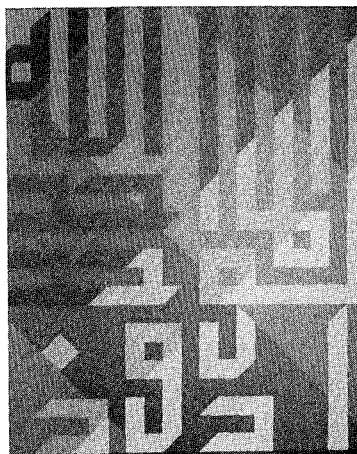
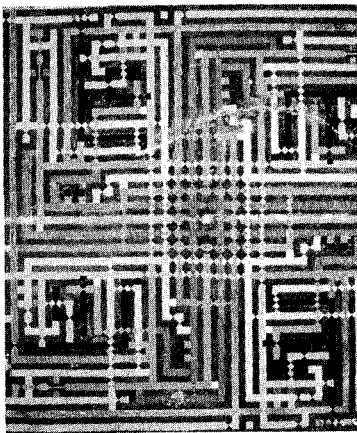
In this context, the mosques that these communities have built acquire a special significance. They are the community's primary means of self-expression, and they invariably serve as community centres as well as prayer buildings. The special needs of this increasingly large group of Muslims should be addressed both in the context of the philosophical and sociological issues they raise and in the specific buildings they have created, which should also be evaluated in architectural terms.

One of these mosques, the Sherefudin White Mosque in Visoko, Yugoslavia, was an Aga Khan Award winner, but it was built by a well-established community going back many generations. There are, however, many other structures, the products of recently settled communities, that deserve our special attention.

Finally, the role of women in contemporary Muslim society raises some issues that must be addressed if we are not to suppress the contributions of half of our population.

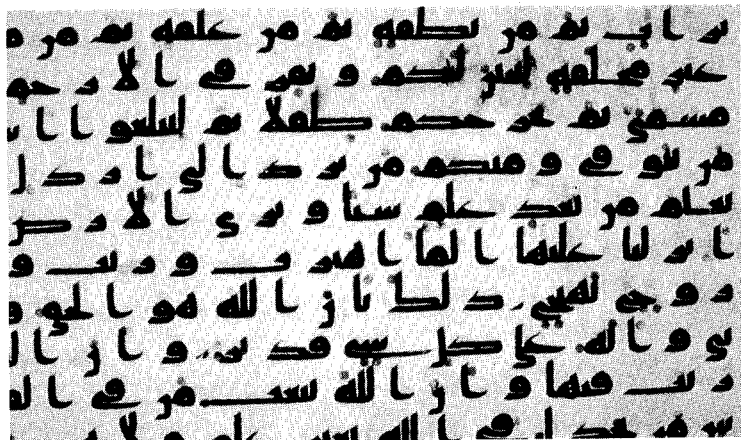
### **The Changing Function of the Mosque in Contemporary Society**

It is important to recognize the interlinked strands of two general themes: the evolution of the functions of the mosque as a building and as a social element; and the forces that are introducing substantial changes in Muslim societies themselves. It is clear that the interaction



Among several simplistic dichotomies that plague our ability to address the issues is one of modernity and tradition. Yet this unique fifteenth-century calligraphy (top) vibrates with as much “modernity” as any Mondrian painting. The recent efforts of talented Arab artists to use calligraphy, such as Kamal Boullata’s work (above), show how the present still finds wellsprings of inspiration from the past, as represented by the Kufic script of a tenth-century A.D. Quran (top right).

Photographs: Courtesy of I. Serageldin



of these two themes is at the heart of a better understanding of the changing function of the mosque.

Under the first theme, the evolving functions of the mosque would include traditional prayer space, community focus, school, landmark, and centre of legislation, learning, and social gathering. These functional changes have to be positioned vis-à-vis the evolution, growth, and complexity of Muslim societies: from the Prophet’s in Medina to those in the medieval golden age. From the nineteenth century, one begins to distinguish a wide variety of new structures coming into play, with the mosque gradually losing some of its traditional functions, at the same time that Muslim societies were confronting Western modernism for the first time. The spin-off of the non-prayer functions of the mosque into different building types has resulted in a gradual diminution of the demands on a single mosque building. This development could have been liberating for mosque architecture, but effectively it has increasingly confined it within a set of predetermined architectural idioms. Finally, the recent trends in the evolution of mosques that indicate a return to a more full-fledged array of social functions should be noted.

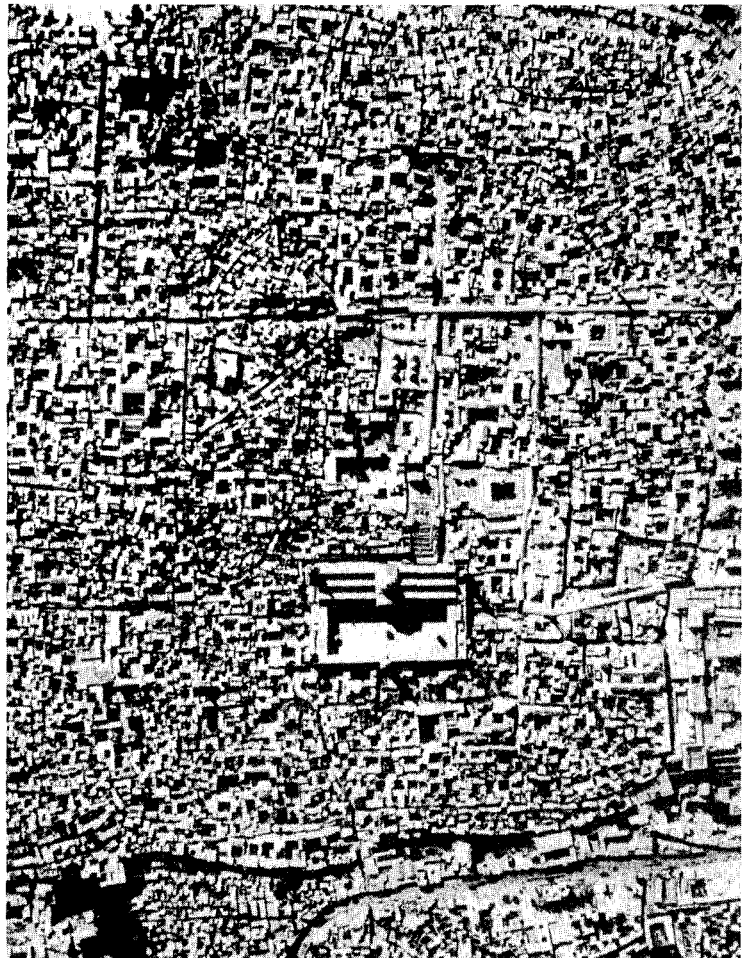
In parallel with the first theme, the rapidly changing character of Muslim societies has to be understood in the context of rising demographic pressures, the broadening of a secularized and modern education, the creation of new economic bases for society with huge shifts towards manufacturing and service industries, and the creation of very large cities, all of which impose issues of scale on architectural expression. But beyond scale, one must recognize that as the complexity of the modern urban scene increases, the townscape evolves rapidly and the role of the mosque as major landmark and organizer of space within the townscape is put in question by towering modern structures and the demands of an ever-increasing infrastructure.

The links between these two themes highlight a number of key issues:



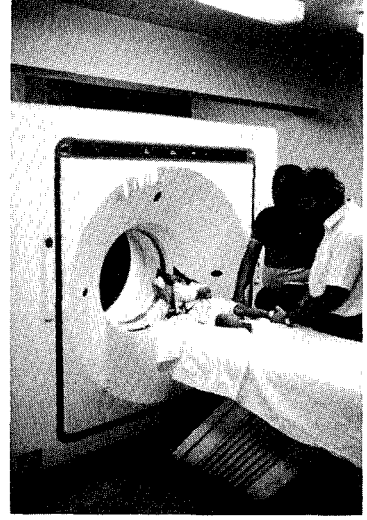
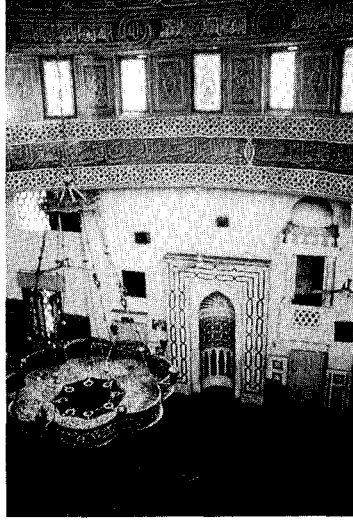
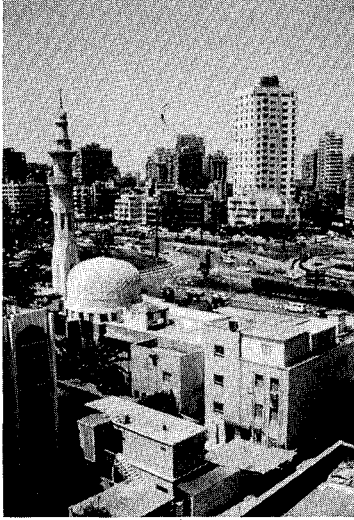
*This modern mosque structure, designed by Gulzar Haider for a Muslim community in Plainfield, Indiana, shows the use of a modern vocabulary which eschews the use of traditional architectural elements for external recognition. Photograph: Courtesy of Gulzar Haider*

- To what extent were the functional changes reflected in the architectural form? Or did the architecture respond to other, more subtle symbolic messages while reflecting an ever-greater scope of building technology?
- Did alternative structures or activity nodes develop their own architectural lexicon? Modern universities have indeed chosen to build separate student centres and congregation areas and activity nodes, while relegating the mosque to a peripheral role. Can the functions of these different structures still be subsumed within the architectural constructs of a modern mosque?
- What do the problems of urban scale dictate in terms of defining the function of the mosque? Can there be a single Masjid Jami that serves the entire city? Does one have to consider a nested hierarchy of mosque structures to serve different scales?
- Can one redefine the multiple purposes of modern complexes as the new functions of a mosque structure, or is the mosque inevitably



*The old city of Damascus, seen from the air, both demonstrates the organic urban texture as well as the prominent place of the mosque. Photograph: I. Serageldin and S. El-Sadek, The Arab City, p. 96*





*The Mostafa Mahmoud Mosque complex (top) includes a prayer area (centre) and many social facilities such as a medical unit (top right), a library (above) and a museum. It is the result of private, rather than state, sponsorship. Photographs: R. Fadel*

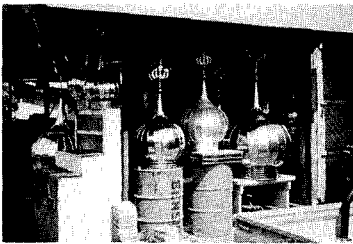
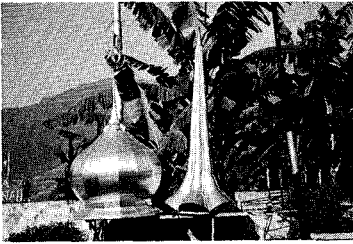
to be relegated only to prayer by the necessities of responding to functional requirements?

### **The Symbolism of Mosque Architecture**

Traditionally the mosque has played a central role in most Muslim environments as the organizer of space and society. It also defines the identity of the society and provides a point of reference to citizens and passers-by as well as travellers. The powerful symbolism of the mosque's traditional architectural vocabulary is unique to Muslim culture and is uniquely identified with it, to the extent of being almost a shorthand designation for "Muslims". The minaret, dome, gateway, and *mihrab* are all key elements of much of mosque architecture. They speak to all Muslims (and even to non-Muslims) with a powerful symbolism that transcends space and time. Yet today we witness the degradation of the symbols to signs and even signals. We have a substantial number of examples in which the deterioration of the semiotic frameworks of contemporary societies is reflected in a semantic disorder and a loss of architectural expression.

The historical examples raise another paradox: impressive monuments that have provided the sense of identity for societies in a culture of mass poverty. The ability to reproduce and relate to an architectural iconography that is connected primarily to wealth and opulence needs to be redefined. The dichotomies and tensions of contemporary Muslim societies, and their inability to confront their own selves, pose problems for all contemporary architects and all Muslim intellectuals.

Indeed one has to recognize the need to resymbolize the existing environment in Muslim societies as a fundamental task of contemporary intellectuals in the Muslim world (see the work of



*The degradation of architectural symbols to signs/signals can be seen in the use of domes and minarets. As can be seen in these photos of domes and minaret finials for sale in side-street shops in Indonesia (top and above), these elements have been reduced to prefabricated "add-ons", which are attached to a conventional structure to signal to the population that it is a mosque (middle).*

*Photographs: S. Özkan;  
I. Serageldin*

Arkoun on this point). In the context of this discussion, we should focus on the intellectual content of the form-giving new architecture and on the role of a new architecture in reshaping and resymbolizing the environment.

A second strand to be woven into this background discussion is the study of how the problem of modernizing the architectural language of religious buildings has been handled elsewhere, especially in the case of modern church architecture. The debates of the 1950s on the role of the established idioms (steeple, bell-tower, apse, etc.) within a modern view of the contemporary church building have relevance to debates on the architecture of the contemporary mosque.

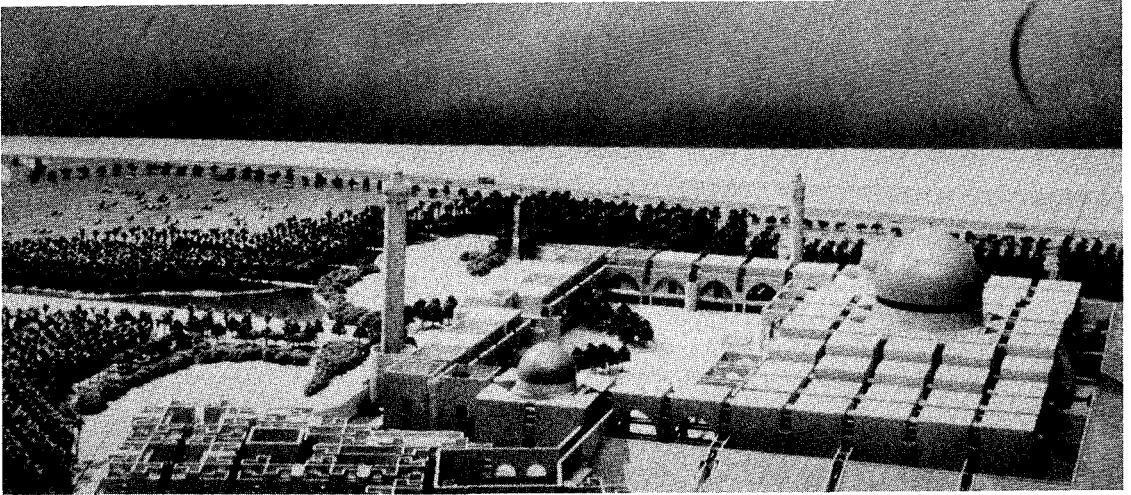
### Some Notable Contemporary Projects

The problems of designing the key buildings of a Muslim community involve many issues. The continuity of key symbolic elements (minaret, dome, gateway, and *mihrab*) can be transformed without being degraded and can be retained while voided of their content. It is the skill of the architects, the depth of their understanding of and their affinity with the communities concerned that makes the difference between kitsch and creativity. The Aga Khan Award winners have shown that creativity can have multiple manifestations, but that each design must be authentic and true to be effective. There are many ways of providing better mosques and areas of congregation that respond to the need of Muslim societies to anchor their self-identity into structures built today and that speak to them and their children as eloquently as the symbols of the past did to their parents and grandparents. Only by freeing the imagination and creativity of architects will this type of architecture make its all-important contribution to an integrated and integrating contemporary Muslim culture.

Our discussions, however, should transcend cataloguing the many interesting new examples of contemporary mosque architecture. We should try, through attentive and insightful criticism, to define patterns and, perhaps, identify trends.

Among the issues this seminar should address are the following:

- The emergence of the state mosque and the divorce of this massive public works structure from its societal milieu.
- The degree of success of novel architectural forms. How acceptable to the population are they? The Sherefudin White Mosque in Visoko, Yugoslavia, is a notable example of a modern structure that was not only accepted and used by the population but one that also generated pride. To what extent are other structures also elements of identification for their users and the surrounding society, and to what extent do they contribute to the development of a new symbolism that is read and understood by the population? The Bhong Mosque complex is certainly understood and



*Project for the State Mosque of Iraq by Rasem Badran. The mosque is completely detached from a social environment and/or physical urban context. Photograph: Courtesy of Rasem Badran*

*The Sherefudin White Mosque of Visoko, Yugoslavia, a 1983 Aga Khan Award winner, shows a bold modern reinterpretation of the architecture of the mosque. Photograph: J. Bétant/AKAA*



appreciated by the population, but does it define a new symbolism or does it simply reflect a wave of populism?

- The visibility of mosques in the contemporary building environment, in spite of the emergence of other large modern structures, continues to underline their importance and impact as form-givers in contemporary architectural language. But are they performing the required role in developing new forms and new language?
- What is the place of traditional forms in contemporary mosques? How does one position the notable work of El-Wakil, for example, in the overall scheme of modernity and tradition in contemporary mosque architecture?

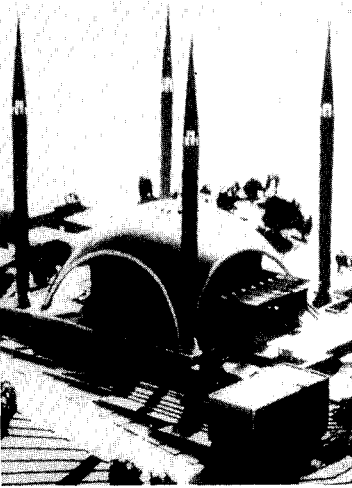
### Patterns and Trends

To better understand the wealth of examples we have seen, it is helpful to position them within a matrix that looks at both building types and architectural approaches. A matrix can undoubtedly be used for all types of buildings, which will help draw forth the myriad manifestations of the spiritual in all facets of the built environment. It is hoped that the deliberations of this seminar will also reveal such expressions. For the present, and for simplicity, let us review such a matrix for the architecture of the contemporary mosque. It could conceivably have five building types (or four if we omit *zawiyas*) and five architectural approaches.

The following are the key definitions:

#### Building Types:

*Large State Mosque.* Huge structures commissioned by central government authorities to express the state's commitment to Islam



State mosque projects express the state's vision of its Muslim identity. The Koşatepe Mosque, in Ankara, Turkey (above), is a modern replica of Sinan's work and was chosen by the state authorities over the modern design by Vedat Dalokay (top) that had won the original 1957 competition.

Photographs: N. Yurtseven;  
Courtesy of I. Serageldin

or to stand as a symbol of national purpose. Usually there will be only one such monument in a country (possibly two to three in large countries, but certainly no more than one in a single city).

*Major Landmark Structure.* Large mosques that are architecturally designed to provide a “landmark” function above and beyond fulfilling their societal functions. Architectural monumentality is being sought by the designer. It impinges on the townscape and affects the order of space in the urban environment.

*Community Centre Complex.* The building, which can have many of the same characteristics as the major landmark structure, is specifically intended to house multiple functions (e.g., library, school, meeting rooms, gallery, etc.) in addition to the mosque per se as a place for prayer.

*Small Local Mosque.* Either a small neighbourhood mosque or the central mosque of a small village. The structure's most distinguishing characteristic is its modest dimensions. It may have multiple functions.

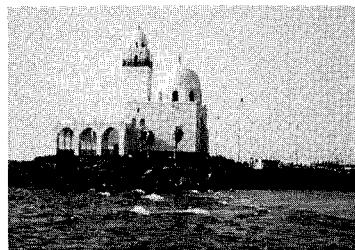
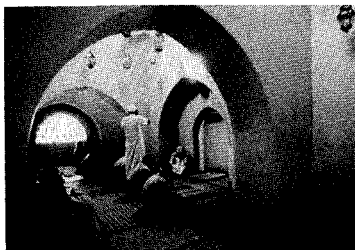
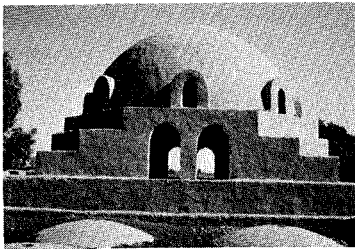
*Zawiyas.* Small prayer areas within larger complexes. These are not covered in the typology proposed here, because they do not usually provide an architectural construct by themselves. From a sociological point of view, however, the proliferation of such *zawiyas* has become a noticeable phenomenon in some countries.

#### Architectural Approaches:

*The Popular (Vernacular) Approach.* The Yaama and Niono mosques have the serene balance of the traditional. Their message is clear and understood by the community they serve and there is no denying the authenticity they exude, even to the foreign visitor. The only jarring note appears in use of the modern material of corrugated tile in one part of the Niono Mosque. The mason himself saw it as incongruous and informed the attendees at the Istanbul seminar that he wanted to rectify it because it did not “fit well” with the products of traditional builders.

*The Traditional Approach.* Some trained and registered architects choose to work in either the vernacular or historically relevant, traditional architectural language. They imbue their work with the self-discipline that the mastery of these conventions, techniques, and proportions requires.

*The Populist Approach.* The exuberance and delight that characterize the mixture of crudeness and stylishness of the Bhong Mosque say much about the present semantic disorder. It is successful with the people it serves, and it raises key issues that architects must address fully if they are to do their share in resymbolizing the Muslim environment of today.



*Hassan Fathy's masterful work found expression in the modest mosques of New Gourn, Egypt (top), and at Dar al-Islam, New Mexico, U.S.A. (middle). The work of Abdel-Wahed El-Wakil, recognized by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1980 for the Halawa House and in 1989 for the Corniche Mosque (above), exemplifies the traditionalist approach. Photographs: C. Avedissian/AKAA; Courtesy of Dar al-Islam; C. Abel/AKAA*

*The Adaptive Modern Approach.* The Said Naum Mosque demonstrates a serious effort to be both distinctly modern and yet echo the traditional vocabulary.

*The Modernist Approach.* The Sherefudin White Mosque of Visoko, Yugoslavia, stands out as an attempt to truly break with the traditional Bosnian architecture surrounding it, while providing a landmark building. This project, which is an example of the modern movement, has the convincing distinction of having been commissioned and paid for by its users. The seven-year debate that preceded its construction, as well as the subsequent use the community makes of it, shows that traditional communities will sponsor avant-garde works and identify with them.

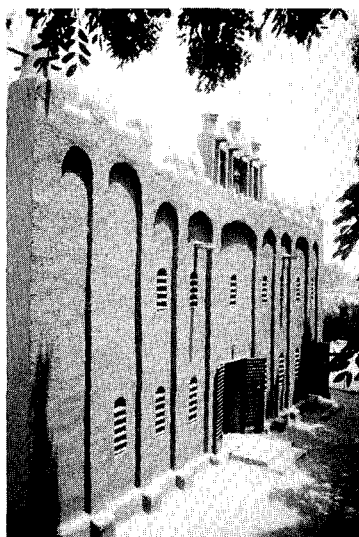
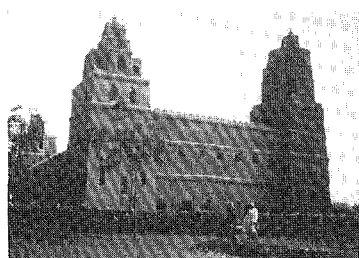
**A Summation**

The preceding discussion provides the context for an approach that links socio-cultural issues with architectural ones. It allows us to construct a matrix for mapping the architectural manifestations of building by architectural approach (rows) and building type (columns), which for mosque architecture would look something like this:

**Analytical Matrix for Examples of Contemporary Mosque Architecture**

Architectural Approach	Building Type			
	Large State Mosque	Major Landmark Structure	Community Centre Complex	Small Local Mosque
Vernacular or Popular				
Traditional				
Populist				
Adaptive Modern				
Modernist				

The columns could be expanded to include examples of other building types or manifestations of buildings and urban spaces, following a taxonomy that could be varied on issues other than scale and/or sponsorship.



The Mosques at Yaama, Niger (above), and Niono, Mali (top), are excellent examples of the best in vernacular architecture resulting from centuries-old traditional building approaches. Both were AKAAs winners, in 1986 and 1983 respectively. The Bhong Village Mosque (right) complex is understood and appreciated by the population even though it raised questions among many architects and critics.

Photographs: K. Adle/AKAA;  
A. Kamran/AKAA;  
J. Bétant/AKAA

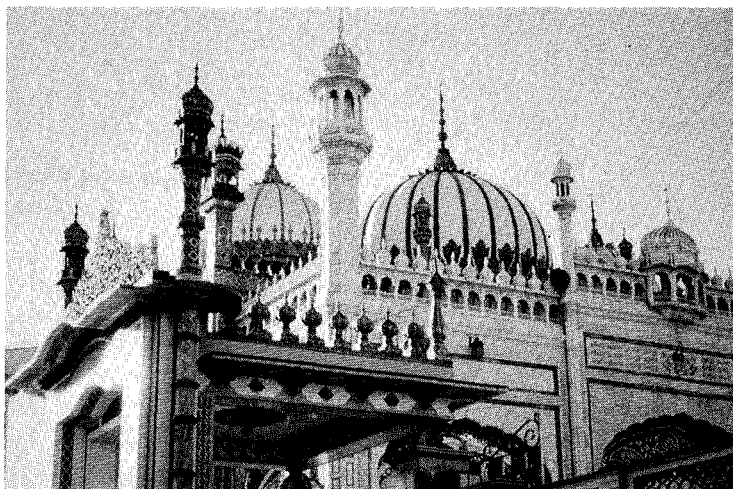
The matrix also provides a framework for the seminar discussions. The next session will try to provide the philosophical, social, and cultural explanations for the choices between the different forms of architectural expressions (the rows) given the shifting societal context. To the extent that sponsorship and functions also affect the choice of building type and the architectural approach, such links and patterns acquire new significance. Professor Arkoun's presentation will do that. Dr. Afaf Mahfouz's presentation will tackle some of these same issues from the important, though often overlooked, perspective of the contemporary Muslim woman.

We will then move to the architecture of the mosque. Mr. Hasan-Uddin Khan will present an overview of this important topic, focusing on the relevant design directions. This paper will be complemented by Professor Gulzar Haider's presentation on the buildings of Muslim communities in the West followed by comments on the organization of space in Muslim communities. After each presentation, distinguished scholars will provide a counterpoint to lead off the discussions, which should be both lively and instructive.

To round off our *tour d'horizon*, a special session will then be devoted to the Indonesian experience. That rich menu should provide ample material for a general discussion to link all the presentations and bring out the key points. Professor Azim Nanji will then have the difficult task of summing up the entire proceedings.

### Envoi

The material we will cover and the issues I have presented here provide the basis for an intellectual approach to *Contemporary Expressions of Islam in Buildings*. It should promote a more thoughtful and enlightened critique of the efforts of contemporary architects and encourage constructive innovation.

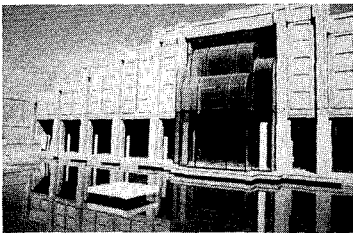




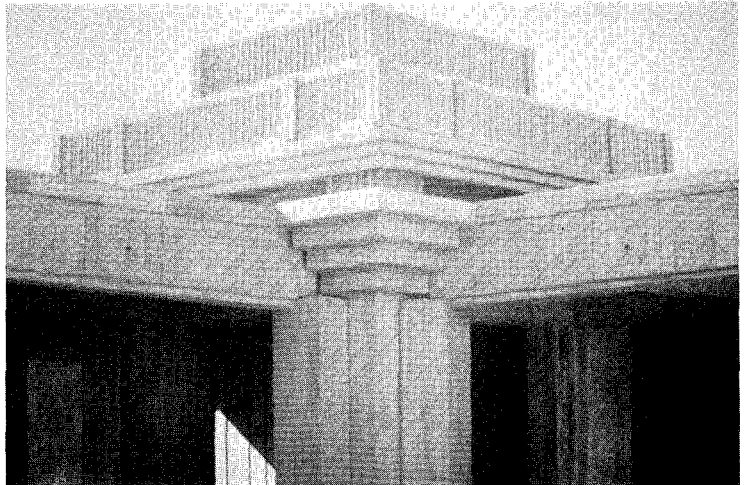
*The Said Naum Mosque, an AKAAs winner (honourable mention) in 1986, is an outstanding example of the adaptive modern approach.  
Photograph: K. Adle/AKAA*



While this is a daunting task, it is nevertheless important to open new vistas in the continuing search for the development of a new and contemporary architectural language in the Muslim world. Much intellectual effort as well as architectural talent will be required, for the future of Muslim societies is, even now, being forged.



*The Parliament Mosque in Ankara, Turkey, makes a radically modern statement that eschews manipulating the traditional architectural language of Turkish/Ottoman mosque design. Mihrab façade (above) and minaret at corner of two wings (right).  
Photographs: N. Yurtseven;  
R. Günay*



## Comments

*Aziz Esmail*

Dr. Ismail Serageldin has raised a series of pertinent questions, and I, for my part, would like to raise a series of yet new questions about those he has posed. At the same time, however, I would like to go beyond simply raising these questions. I would like to suggest a way of thinking about them, and indeed, perhaps, to put before you what might constitute the beginnings of possible answers to these issues.

Implicit in what Dr. Serageldin has said are a number of opposing terms, a number of concepts that define themselves in antithesis to each other. There are, for instance, pairs of opposing concepts such as these: modernity and tradition; the sacred and the profane; the spiritual and the secular. I would like to make a few remarks about these pairs of concepts, which feature in Dr. Serageldin's paper as assumptions, forming, as it were, the architecture of his whole argument, but which stand in need, nonetheless, of critical examination.

First, then, the opposing concepts of modernity and tradition. The first feature that needs to be noted about modernity is that it is not a modern thing. Modernity is a very old phenomenon indeed. In Islam the consciousness of modernity is already present in the Revelation. Consider, for instance, this statement in the Quran: "When it is said to them, 'Follow what God has sent down', they say: 'No. We will follow such things as we found our fathers doing.' What, if their fathers had no understanding of anything, and if they were not guided?"

Here we find as succinct a critique of traditionalism as we might wish to have. The Quran attacks blind conformity to the ways of the old. It attacks blind, unthinking adherence to the past. This is a form of modernity. The voice of the Revelation is always and invariably the voice of modernity, in that it is a voice that assails the hegemony of custom and of fossilized habits of thought and feeling.

From this fact there follows an important corollary. If the Quran embodies a critique of traditionalism — if it incorporates, within itself, the voice of modernity — then we may expect that Muslim consciousness might have preserved this voice, in one form or another, throughout its history. At the same time, however, we need to take note of the fact that the Revelation, once it has come into being, is itself the source of a history. It becomes the centrepiece of a tradition. Where does this tradition, in its turn, stand in regard to the voice of modernity? Any deep or adequate answer to this question must seek to go beyond the dichotomy of tradition and modernity. The real question is not one of a choice between the two; it is not one of electing to belong to a history or standing outside it. It is, rather, a question of how we may come to have a history which does not become absolute. It is a question of how we may have a past which is not an inertia. How we may, in other words, have what we might perhaps be prepared to call a "tradition",

which is yet free from the attitudes that we associate with traditionalism.

A secularist is bound to object to this way of thinking. His response might be: "Why bother at all?" He is apt to say: "We know what the dead weight of history, the dead hand of tradition, can do. Instead of modifying or amending the manner in which we might belong to a religious history, why not jettison it altogether?" This line of thought leads us to the issue of secular as opposed to religious standpoints on the world. My own position is to seek to go beyond the alleged dichotomy between the two. There are aspects of religion that secular, enlightened reason is altogether right to reject. There is, however, no reason why a rational faith — one which is in tune with both the findings of science and the realities of human life — cannot incorporate within itself the best of what nowadays goes under the term "secular". However, the objections which I have outlined above are expressions, not simply of "secular" thinking, but of *secularism*, in what I like to describe as the strong sense of the term.

Secularism in the strong sense of the term has the characteristics of an ideology, treating religion as a rival to itself, and attempting to offer a total explanation of its own. It is predicated, among other things, on three axioms. It insists that the religious or theological interpretation of the universe is a mystification, at once revealing and camouflaging more mundane, empirical facts and longings. It argues, furthermore, that being a secondary, masquerading layer of consciousness, it can be discarded or eradicated. And, finally, it claims that society is the better without it — that it is not only feasible but desirable that human life be lived without the illusion of faith. This extreme view has three principal deficiencies, which, in summary, are that it is, firstly, not entirely honest with itself; nor, secondly, is it altogether consistent with itself; in addition, it is not fully aware of its own origins.

A truly secular viewpoint, honest with itself, must refrain from replicating what after all is one of the essential traits of religion, namely, the drive for an all-inclusive view of the world. But the secular rejection of total explanations — which always go beyond what is known to date, and what can reasonably be known about the future, to what really is in the nature of a mystery, and, hence, more properly the object of faith rather than scientific knowledge — tends to lapse into ideological secularism. It then smuggles the kind of eschatological, or utopian, imagination that is characteristic of religion into its own system. In short, it turns into a faith, but a faith that adopts a secular disguise. Marxism offers a good example: it prides itself on being a science, but in reality is no such thing, being at best a bad religion.

Nor are secular philosophies always aware of the historical sources of their greater ideals. The ideals of Renaissance humanism, for instance, were not unconnected to Christianity on one hand, and

the heritage of classical thought on the other. And the latter, though not religious, differed greatly, in the supremacy of the metaphysical quest at its heart, from modern secularism.

Moreover, the secular viewpoint — again in the strong sense of the term — falls short of self-consistency. If its ultimate aim or ideal is human perfection, then it must take full account of the ineradicable, *human* foundations of spiritual life. These foundations lie in the perception of the limit-points of human existence: the mystery of birth, the enigma of suffering and death. No matter how great a measure of progress is achieved by science, the awesome perplexity of life — the marvel as well as the anxiety — remains irreducible. A secularist ideology does not have the conceptual tools with which to account for this human experience of limit-situations. It is in confronting these situations that the sense of the sacred foundation of life is invoked. A humanism that wishes to banish theology, but seeks to take full measure of man, is obliged on its own terms — by virtue of its commitment to a human understanding — to reckon with the spiritual life of mankind.

Apart from the limit-situations, there are the ethical questions which confront men as social beings: questions of justice, poverty, destitution, the uses of wealth, of power and subjection, love and hate, pain and compassion. These ethical questions have a close, integral relationship to limit-situations because they lie at the outer reaches of mundane discourse. Together, they constitute what I would simply call the spiritual dimension of life.

It is not always that these questions are raised consciously or systematically. A religion, however, may *embed* them. Spirituality, we may then say, is embedded in the structure, the conceptual and ceremonial or symbolic architecture of faith. For this reason, I insist on drawing a distinction between the spiritual and the religious. A religious structure may serve as a carrier, a vehicle, a transparent medium, of spiritual impulses and points of view. Or it may harden into the fossilized shell of dogma and ritual, oppressive rather than enabling. I do not mean that doctrine and ritual are ipso facto undesirable. On the contrary, they are inevitable. Human beings do not experience the sacred in a realm of formlessness. Experience is already an organization. In social or communal life, conventions of thought and gesture are part and parcel of the definition of social existence. The question, therefore, is not whether one can do without organized religion, but whether the religion has become an end in itself, or whether it is but a means to an end.

The dimension of the spirit, however, is not confined to religious life. It is also reflected in literature or art, indeed, in cultural life as a whole. In the European context, the contributions of Shakespeare, Beethoven, or the masters in visual art or architecture, to reflection on the profoundest circumstances of the human estate on earth, are widely recognized. Islamic civilization — and we must habituate ourselves to thinking of Islam as a civilization rather than

a body of religious law or beliefs alone — has its own long history of literature, art, and architecture. A cultural history of Islam has yet to be written. We need today to begin to pay attention to it. We need to regard it, moreover, neither as a wholly sacred enterprise, nor as a wholly secular one. We need to appreciate it as the *mediating* space between the spiritual and the mundane.

This concept of mediating realities is an important one. It has, however, seldom received sufficient attention. Modern discourse is structured around opposing categories of thought. There is, for instance, the antithesis of the religious and the secular. No concepts that could bridge these spheres have yet been satisfactorily formulated. There are, again, the opposing claims of the State on one hand, the individual on the other. Scarcely enough attention has been paid, in this respect, to the intermediate structures of community life, which occupy a ground somewhere between political collectivities on one hand, and the individual psyche on the other.

There are, similarly, the opposed concepts of the public and the private. Here again, the need to think of the two less as points of contrast than as points on a continuum is considerable. This is an issue that brings us closer home to the theme of this seminar. I wish, therefore, that Dr. Serageldin's paper had offered some analysis of the mosque, or masjid, as a space that expresses and enables this continuum between the public and the private. At one end, the mosque serves, especially through the Friday congregational prayers, as a channel for public consciousness, which may be on the scale of a neighbourhood, a city, or, in the case of the great mosques, a nation, or even beyond, looking out to the horizon of a universal *ummah*. At the other end, the mosque serves as a sanctuary for personal prayer or meditation, the soul's solitary communion with its own inner depths. In between these largely public and largely private spaces of consciousness, there is a whole spectrum. Thus, for instance, in Sufi communities, the *dhikr* represents an intersection between the scales of public and private meaning. On one hand, it reinforces the identity of the Sufi fraternity, which is not a public, but rather a community, or a subcommunity — still, therefore, a collective rather than a private identity. On the other hand, because the idea of the Sufi *dhikr* is integrally wedded to the notion of an interior life, it also incorporates an inalienably private dimension.

An analysis of meaning in Islamic life must pay full attention to symbolic mediations of the kind I have been outlining. The Islamic experience is an embodied experience. This means that there is something that we may regard as an Islamic *ethos*, over and above the propositions of belief or practice that were promulgated by theologians or jurists over the course of Muslim history as indicators of faith. This ethos, as distinct from the theological creed, is to be found in the institutions, literary traditions, and architectural shapes of Muslim society.

This does not, however, mean that the tenets of Islamic belief or thought can be deduced from the concrete particulars of Muslim societies. In fact, it is misleading to speak of them, without further qualification, as “Islamic”. This is not a difficulty confined to the Islamic case. It is simply a reflection of the fact that the relationship between world-view and social detail is seldom simple or straightforward. In discourse about buildings and designs, in particular, one now and then sees interpretations that ascribe symbolic meanings, item by item, to architectural details. The results of such thinking are almost invariably banal and absurd. One attempts in vain to figure out what a minaret or a pillar might “represent”. Even when the point of these things is symbolic rather than functional, it is rarely symbolic in such a way as to enable a simple translation to be made from buildings to words.

The relationship between architecture and the human ethos is nonetheless there. It is at the level of this ethos, rather than of religious ideas, that the wider significance of the architecture is best looked for. Like medicine or engineering, architecture has physical, technical dimensions that impose limits on the imagination. All interpretations of architecture must take account of the constraints of matter, as well as the autonomous logic of aesthetic styles. At the same time, because architecture is so germane to the human quest for form and order, it is part of a larger discourse of human ends and purposes. It cannot be addressed in isolation from the humanistic venture as a whole. This means transcending our present compartmentalization of knowledge into discrete techniques and disciplines. Let me emphasize here that I am arguing for something deeper, something more basic, than what is nowadays called an “interdisciplinary” approach. The task is not simply to make the “disciplines” blend together into what would merely be an intellectual cocktail mixture. It is, rather, to explore the human foundations in their unity, in a state logically prior to, and transcending, the division of the human project into separate arts, crafts, and sciences. The ultimate aim, in this as in other areas, should be to reconnect knowledge to the human person, for man stands at the point of intersection between technique and spirituality.

It is within this wider context of humanistic discourse that our analysis of architecture may well come to be integrated in the future, if we are sensitive both to the relative autonomy of architecture — its methods, its standards, its aesthetics — as well as to its overlap with the spiritual questions of life.

## Comments

*Mohammad al-Asad*

Dr. Serageldin has raised a number of interesting and stimulating issues. Time constraints will allow me to comment on only a few of them. To begin with, I detect a note of puritanism in the presentation. Dr. Serageldin is willing to accept a variety of approaches to the design of the built environment. These range from the disciplined vernacular revivals of Hassan Fathy to the eclectic historicism of Abdel-Wahed El-Wakil. He is even tolerant of what he himself describes as the bland, modernist building blocks of Singapore. However, when faced with a situation in which the automobile is combined with the mule-pulled wagon, the T-shirt with the Gallabiyah, and the historic structure with the contemporary, concrete one, his threshold of tolerance is exceeded. I find this puritanism objectionable. The coexistence of such contradictory signs has become commonplace and an integral part of urban settings throughout the developing world. Attempting to eliminate it would be unrealistic as well as unfeasible. In such a context, Robert Venturi's statement that "main street is almost alright" is of relevance. Rather than rejecting the confusion characterizing most of the developing world's contemporary cities, today's architects and planners may find it more rewarding to accept it, deal with it, and attempt to create a sense of order out of it.

One of the important points which Dr. Serageldin has brought up is the role of the mosque in contemporary Muslim societies. With the advent of modernization and Westernization (two terms which admittedly are still in need of more accurate definitions), the mosque has achieved a heightened level of symbolic significance. It has become an expression of an independent identity for the various Muslim societies in a world experiencing increasing uniformity. At the same time, the mosque has become more of a "sacred" place, which has lost much, though not all, of its traditional utilitarian diversity. Today's mosques are a far cry from the house and mosque of the Prophet in which commercial and political activities took place. The contemporary mosque has become a place devoted almost exclusively to the act of performing the prayers. In such a context, the idea of housing a musical recital or a wedding in a mosque, as is common in many churches, is simply unacceptable.

I would like to make a few comments about Dr. Serageldin's system of taxonomy in which design approaches to the mosque are divided into five categories: popular (vernacular), traditional, populist, adaptive modern, and modernist. While not rejecting such a system of categorization, I suggest placing these categories within an even simpler system by dividing approaches to contemporary mosque design into two groups: one that accepts historical precedents as the main source of inspiration for the generation of forms, and one that does not.

The approach advocating a minimal role of past prototypes commands a small number of adherents among today's mosque designers. For a mosque within this approach, such as the Sherefudin

White Mosque in Visoko, Yugoslavia, instead of attempting to relate to a specific architectural or cultural heritage, the aim is the creation of an abstract spiritual space in which the role of the past, while not totally excluded, is given a secondary emphasis.

To the adherents of such an approach, the only restraints lie in the satisfaction of a number of utilitarian requirements. These include the provision of an orientation towards Mecca, a place from which the imam can deliver the *khutbah*, as well as a space capable of accommodating numerous rows of worshippers. Beyond that, the architects rely on their imaginative capabilities to create a spiritual space conducive to the acts of prayer and spiritual contemplation.

As for the approach accepting the authority of the past, it is the one which the majority of contemporary mosque designers observe. This approach has been further emphasized in recent examples of mosque design. In my opinion, the most significant of those examples include Robert Venturi's entry for the Baghdad State Mosque competition (1982), Rasem Badran's design for the Friday Mosque of Riyadh (1985), and Abdel-Wahed El-Wakil's various mosques designed for the Saudi Arabian cities of Medina and Jeddah. With Venturi, one is presented with a highly improvised interpretation of past prototypes. El-Wakil relies upon a literal but eclectic revival of the past. As for Badran, he provides a literal and puritanical revival of past forms, but one which also expresses sensitivity to the contemporary urban fabric.

The ubiquity of the approach accepting the past as a major point of reference for the design of the contemporary mosque should not be surprising. Religion remains a historically defined phenomenon. To the pious, the utterances, writings, and actions of figures belonging to the past of a given religious tradition are of paramount significance. In current debates among Muslims, the importance of living up to the standards set by early Muslims is consistently emphasized. In the same manner, most contemporary architects involved in the design of mosques find guidance in the historical examples of Islamic religious architecture.

I am not advocating one design approach over the other. Each has its own merits. What is more important than accepting or rejecting a specific design methodology is the creation of high-quality architecture. Such architecture is one which reveals an effective manipulation of forms and spaces. Still, it is one which requires a strong grasp of architectural history. A given architectural past has to be understood if one is to rely on it and incorporate it. At the same time, a convincing rationale has to be provided if one is to exclude it. In other words, it is only after a comprehension of past prototypes is achieved that decisions concerning their inclusion or exclusion can be made.

The Western world has been involved in an active dialogue with its architectural heritage since the Renaissance. Such a dialogue was



not interrupted even during the interlude of twentieth-century modernism. During that period, research on the history of architecture was maintained. On the other hand, it is only since the 1970s that architecture has begun to assume an integral position in the cultural discourses taking place in the Islamic world. Therefore, the significance of the Islamic world's architectural heritage to contemporary Muslims is still in the process of formation.

## Discussion

### Yuswadi Saliya

Aziz Esmail has brought forward certain requirements that warrant our attention: our terminology has to be sharpened; opposing concepts need to be critically examined; and we must look at culture as a mediating force. Mohammad al-Asad, on the other hand, has mentioned an important subject which has not been addressed yet and that is the concept of acceptance; he has also contested Dr. Serageldin's categories of mosque design. I hope we can tackle these issues in our discussions.

### Ismail Serageldin

Since the initial purpose of my presentation was to raise the issues that should be addressed by this conference, it is therefore not my intention to provide specific answers. But I believe that in the preceding comments a number of issues have arisen that I would like to underline, as I believe they deserve our attention now in this group even though some of the other issues will be taken up later.

I would like to start first with the notion of social context, and I agree with Aziz Esmail's views of culture as a mediating concept, with the idea that there is indeed a deep structure in society that one has to come to grips with. It is absolutely essential that we do not fall into the trap of looking at architecture out of the societal context in which it exists. If we do that, then we will fall into a sterile debate about forms; we will lose sight of the social reality that this architecture is supposed to address. And part of the social reality of Muslim societies today is the pervasive poverty that I mentioned, the constant barrage of external stimuli, and the lack of an adequate set of symbols that enables the contemporary society to articulate a response that is integrated, in the sense that it has a certain coherence between the spiritual and the temporal, in the sense that it has the capacity to incorporate the new, without locking itself into simply forever replicating particular elements of the past. And I think we have among the people present at this seminar a number of very distinguished architects who have done just that. Each of them, in his own way, in his own work, has managed to take these elements of the past, reinterpret them, while keeping in mind societal reality and cultural continuity. And that requires, as Aziz Esmail pointed out, a certain appreciation of history and historical continuity and a recognition that part of that historical continuity in Muslim societies, in words that Professor Arkoun has told us many times before, was a historical rupture in the development of intellectual thought. How to overcome that rupture is part of

an understanding of history. Both the societal context and the historical context together are manifested in the changing function of the mosque. If we allow ourselves to look at mosques exclusively as places of prayer, exclusively as a manifestation of a series of manipulated symbols that utilize religion as a legitimatizing force, or religion as a vital force, we would lose sight of the need to embed these structures into a social function — one that does not accept a divorce between the spiritual and the temporal, does not accept a divorce between the different functions of community and the sense of community, which history teaches us was one of the functions that existed in the past. So that's a point that I believe the discussions should focus on.

The second point is that we should not dwell exclusively on the mosque. The seminar was arranged so that although we might recognize the tremendously powerful architectural symbolism of the mosque, we should not allow that idea to so dominate the discussions that we lose sight of the articulation of space, the nature of the development of the urban pattern that exists in Muslim societies, and what they mean in terms of how that symbolism resonates in today's contemporary society. So while we should not accept that the mosque on one level becomes merely a prayer hall by losing its social functions, we should also not lose sight of the fact that important as it is, there are many other manifestations that have to be brought into our discussions or else we will have missed the notion of social context.

The last point I will make is to take up one of the arguments that my colleague Mohammad al-Asad has put forward. I do not think that it is fair to assume that there are architects who do not take the past as a point of reference. Architects do not work in a vacuum; they work with a community, with a client, with a code, with a particular site that has a meaning, and hence they are obligated to understand the sites and work with them. The manner of interpreting the elements of the past is what is at stake, and hence I think that, as I have said at the beginning, we should avoid the simple dichotomy of modern and traditional, we should avoid the simple dichotomies of a variety of such dualisms, and we should also avoid the notion of saying that we are either working with the past as a term of reference or avoiding it. But there is a willingness to be bold enough to say every society and every generation has a right to make a contribution that speaks to its own reality. And architects as artists, as members of that mediating function, which Aziz Esmail was talking about, have a role to play so that the architecture produced is one that reflects the evolving and changing reality of the contemporary society and, by its very presence, helps solve and affect that contemporary reality. So these are the three points that I believe we need to focus on perhaps more than the others at this stage of the discussion, as others will be taken up in the various sessions designed for that purpose.

**Achmad Noe'man**

I would like to ask whether it is necessary to try to use the past as a source of inspiration for Islamic architecture or whether it would be better to try to start from the principles and teachings of Islam by using the Quran and the Hadith. If I had to design a mosque or any building, certain *ayahs* and sayings would be my source of inspiration. A guiding Quranic verse for architects would be: "And God does not like to spend freely, for those who are spendthrift are the brothers of the devil", and an important saying of the Prophet should be taken into consideration: "The important thing is not the mosque, but the quality of the prayer itself." Also of importance is the content of two Quranic texts: Tawbah (Chapter 9, verse 108) and Talaq (Chapter 63, verse 3).

**Mohammed Arkoun**

It is very interesting to consider whether it is possible today to start, as you suggest, from the Quran and the Hadith itself. Going back directly to the Quran regarding Islamic faith is obviously good and recommended, but is it possible today, given the cultural and intellectual context in which architects have to design and to build? Of course it would be a very good exercise for us here to discuss all the problems related to the position of the architect working in a society in which many people want, as you do, to go back directly to the Quran. This is a debate that takes place in societies, so it cannot just be dismissed. We have to go through it, but this discussion will raise many questions which we are not able for the moment to consider in our reading of the Quran itself. Are we going to read it according to the commentators of the Middle Ages or are we going to read it according to the intellectual and scientific linguistic anthropological context? Your question is very relevant to what we want to do with the Aga Khan Award for Architecture; this kind of approach and these kinds of new reflections are coexisting attitudes in our societies.

**Kemas Madani**

I would like to address the issue of the changing function of the mosque in contemporary societies. Ever since the time of the Prophet, a mosque has always had several functions. It is not solely designated as a place of prayer, but it has also many social uses, such as education and the spreading of the teachings of the Prophet. The Prophet gave examples of this, as for instance in the case of the Nabaur Mosque, where he said in a Hadith: "There is no praying for the neighbour other than in the mosque." The fact that one receives a greater favour when one prays in the mosque is indicative enough that the mosque has a social function.

During colonial times, many colonialists in Islamic countries endeavoured to abolish the various functions of mosques, making them places only for praying. It is therefore our task today to return to or reawaken those other useful functions. We must indeed acknowledge that today the architectural finishings of mosques have become more complicated than in traditional mosques of former times. This is due to the fact that in this modern time, when the world is rushing towards globalism, Muslims face more complicated and diverse challenges.

There are two types of mosques today: mosques as elements of an environment (in shopping centres, hotels, campuses, etc.) and mosques as places for social activities and as places for worship (such as those in housing environments). In my opinion, the issue we have to address is not the changing function of mosques in contemporary societies but rather, the changing Muslim society, from a traditional to a modern society.

Designing a mosque for a traditional society should be different from designing a mosque for a modern society. However, the mosques should have the same functions.

#### **Ismail Serageldin**

I think Mr. Madani's question is very valid, and I do believe that this is part of what we, both myself and the two commentators, tried to bring to the fore. In a changing society, in a contemporary society, architects have a role to play, and part of dealing with that role is either to accept or to create new structures, which in turn not only reflect society but also help shape it. The point that I think Mr. Madani has also underlined is very pertinent, that the presence of mosques or *zawiyas* in a variety of structures obviously creates the context that makes them into a single-purpose unit of a larger structure or complex. But that is something that should be studied by architects on a case-by-case basis.

What we are talking about really is more the societal function of the mosque, as the mode of community, as a link between the notion of an identity that revolves around a Muslim function and merely the ritualistic manifestation of congregational prayer. This is the element that has been lost somewhere. If on the campus of a university, for example, we see centres of university life such as a student union or a meeting-place on one side of the campus, and the mosque on the other side, then clearly the break becomes more profound. If, on the other hand, structures are part of an overall composite and the language is symbolically and architecturally expressed in such a way that the entire complex revolves around a vision of articulation of space, of identification of elements, then the fact that this specific part allocated to the mosque structure exclusively is less complex an issue. We find these manifestations very apparent in Muslim communities abroad, or Muslim communities living in a society as a minority.

It is very rare, and I would stand corrected by Professor Haider, that one would find a mosque structure created by a Muslim community abroad, exclusively designed or used as a prayer space. Almost invariably it is tied to a variety of other communal activities because the Muslim community is trying to define its identity and its cultural context within a larger and different society. As such, it seeks an architectural expression, even if using a very different and modernistic language, that allows a linkage. An example in point is the Bosnian Yugoslav mosque, where the congregational prayer complex is linked to a wing that is used for a variety of other communal activities and serves as an active community centre. I do not think one should be literalist and say that people have to undertake all these activities, as they did in the time of the Prophet, by sitting around in the open space of the mosque. But the question is whether the architects today are perpetuating a divorce between a societal function and a ritualistic expression of religion, an almost *augustinian function* to use a word that His Highness has used on an earlier occasion, or whether architects are indeed struggling with this changing societal reality to enable themselves, by the work that they do, not just to reflect the deep structures of that society but to help shape it. And that is what good architecture is about, and indeed it helps us to underline the fact that we should not be talking exclusively about mosque architecture but about other types of buildings as well and the links to other spaces.

#### **Aziz Esmail**

I have one general comment. I think it would be helpful if we did not just talk about the functions of a mosque, but went beyond that. A more important question is perhaps the following: does the mosque reflect the integrity of the community? I believe that the community is a more important concept here than function. Now you mentioned, Ismail, the point that the community performs a Muslim function. What, however, is a Muslim function? I think there are two issues: one is the sheer importance of the community. Religious consciousness does not exist in a rarefied, abstract medium. It is an embodied consciousness, which means that it is reflected and sustained in social and cultural institutions, in the mediating forms of communal life. The second issue that arises then is: do forms of this kind (which could well be religious forms) express something more than themselves, or are they liable to become absolute in themselves? Are they a means to an end or an end in themselves? For, if religious institutions and religious ideas or doctrines express or reflect spiritual perspectives, then that is a very different situation from one in which those institutions become absolute objects in themselves. These are some of the fundamental issues that affect human culture as a whole, and hence need to be discussed in the context of this seminar.

**Jale Erzen**

I would like to offer two concepts which might help clarify certain questions: one is the concept of process and the other, of aesthetic experience. They relate to two ideas that Dr. Serageldin talked about: code and spiritualism.

We can think of codes as having direct and specified relations between meaning and form fixed at a certain time and space. But this way of thinking, I believe, has been behind most mediocre architecture in the Islamic world, as by trying to create a very fixed relationship it turns it into a sign which forgets the idea of process in the environment, through history, culture, and the like.

The other thing that I would like to introduce is the idea of the aesthetic experience. Without doubt, all religious architecture is concerned with the spiritual. But art attains the spiritual through the aesthetic. To avoid getting lost in metaphysical concepts, I propose the use of "aesthetic experience" in place of the "spiritual". This is directly related to the physical and experimental domains of architecture. All successful examples of mosques have achieved spiritualism through a direct address to the senses, articulating their material sources of perception, with colour, light, sound, and tactility. The mosque had to be the realm of the highest aesthetic order. The relation of this aesthetic order to Islamic spiritualism had to do with an aesthetic sensibility peculiar to a kind of life and value system. Whether such a particular aesthetic sensibility is still alive today, in Islamic countries, is questionable. Therefore, the claim of the survival of a "deep structure" conditioning aesthetic choices in architectural expressions in Islam seems to me to disregard the question of historical and artistic processes.

**Dogan Kuban**

I would like to underline some general problems concerning the main topics of the seminar. Concerning history, there are for our purposes two stages in the history of "Islamic culture": one is the conquering, dominating, self-sufficient Islam of the medieval and post-medieval period (up to the seventeenth century); the second, is the modern, the contemporary, which is, despite the existence of sovereign states, culturally, scientifically, economically, and politically dominated.

Like all other societies, Muslims adore cars and televisions. The relationship between a genuine (whatever is a genuine) Muslim culture and a Toyota or a Mercedes or a Sony is nil. For contemporary Islam there is no definable relationship between the artifacts used, the environment created, and the Muslim culture. There are no longer Damascene swords made of local steel. So if the world of form is so unspecific, what is specific today for Islam is the usage, i.e., the modes and the modalities of use. If we could return to a time when in certain areas pre-industrial modes of living survived, we

could find there undisturbed some historical forms which are chronologically related to a Muslim context. This shows that when we speak of Islam it is history, and our frame of reference in all discussions is essentially historical, as there is no Muslim form *per se* without historical reference.

Let us look at culture and artistic form. Islam as faith is a total phenomenon and theoretically must stay pure, as it comes from the Quran and the Hadith. But in Islam as a culture, religion is only a component which determines certain behaviour but does not determine everything. If Islam as a faith would determine the shape of a mosque, this would stay unchanged. But this is not the case, and from the beginning there have not been specific forms determined by religious injunctions. Architectural shapes must have been defined by extra-religious factors. The diversity of mosque forms is sufficient to prove this. They have been determined by a number of factors in which religion stipulated only the necessity of praying. What is demonstrated in architecture is, therefore, not faith but culture. The Istanbul Hilton or the Jakarta Hilton International are not the expressions of any faith, but only expressions of modern consumerism. Whatever is changeable in form cannot be produced by faith alone and what is related to faith is once and for all expressed in the Quran.

In the Islamic way of living there is no model except for the belief in God. Since the beginning of Islam living habits have been decided by geographical, regional, and historical circumstances. Clothing, eating, living, building, and speaking have little or nothing to do with the belief system. In contemporary Islam similar differences exist in many parts of the world. The context of our discussions is necessarily historical; an Islamic expression in architecture is cultural and historicist. Without historical reference and symbolism there is no Muslim form or space *per se*. There is no universal Islamic form. Even the supposedly most Islamic of forms such as domes, minarets, and courtyards are shared with other cultures. Therefore all discussions should be in a regional historical context. A modern mosque imitating a Fatimid model has no relevance in Malaysia, except for historians and critics. A specific cultural area creates its own symbolic forms, and universality is a function of communications.

The mosque as a dominant feature in the landscape of Muslim cities is an imperial symbol. Monumentality is not the expression of religion, but of political power. Otherwise, the mosque of the Prophet should be accepted as the most monumental. Monumentality therefore is a lost war; it should not necessarily be a religious component of mosque design. A huge minaret high as a skyscraper has less spiritual power than a smaller one. A high level of spirituality was present when Bilal called people to prayer from the top of the building. There was no minaret in the house of the Prophet.



Aziz Esmail's definition of culture as a mediating structure between the material life and spirituality is enormously relevant for our discussion. Indeed, this mediating structure should be reconstructed at each stage of history.

Finally the role of the mosque in society is obviously not decided by architects but by the community, by politicians, and by politics, and today as a response to universal interaction, which challenges all beliefs. To cope with such a challenge a reinterpretation of history is necessary.

### **Ali Shuaibi**

Mr. al-Asad has reduced Ismail Serageldin's classification to two groups and I would like to make them one. The danger of classifying architects into groups according to the forms of their designs — those who refer to traditional architecture in their work and those who do not — is that it may imply that those who refer to history are backward, while those who do not are innovative. The argument I would like to present is that they really form one group and that none of them is truly inventing intentionally, in the sense of creating from nothing. A known fact in secular science, as well as in religious theory, is that only God creates from nothing.

Designers of various disciplines always borrow from the past, whether ancient or recent, but vary in their approaches. In architecture some borrow models, like Hassan Fathy, while others borrow with transformations, or abstractions from nature or man-made forms, such as the tensile structures of Otto Frei. Others borrow processes, codes, or techniques, which is clearly apparent in the works of contemporary movements that broke away from classical orders in Europe, since they mostly fall into very small specific categories with distinctive similarities.

Architectural criticism in this century has been encouraging the process of change of expressions away from conventions, even to the extreme unfortunately, in the same manner as in the fine arts. But the value of forms and expressions in architecture, apart from their symbolic values, is only in their implications on the environment, the well-being of society, and their cost. So the question is: could architectural criticism concentrate on the quality and implications that the change from the conventional is bringing into architecture? And are there parameters that could be established to guide that process?

### **Mohammad al-Asad**

The whole issue of starting from a vacuum which Mr. Shuaibi and Dr. Serageldin mentioned is very much a correct one in that ignoring the past totally is like having amnesia. You can decide to ignore or reject the past, but it does not mean that it will not be

in your work unless you make the conscious decision of doing so. In fact, a very interesting example comes from Mies van der Rohe, who is probably considered one of the most nonhistorical or ahistorical of architects that the world has seen. If you look at the plan of his National Gallery in Berlin, you'll notice that it is almost a copy of the plan of the Dome of the Rock, and it seems to be somewhat intentional. So the idea of simply totally removing the past is not there, but still one can have the option of saying, "I want to ignore it, or I want to reject it", creating a rupture with it, to use Professor Arkoun's terminology.

Another thing that I find very interesting in this debate is the whole isolation of the term "Islamic architecture". Can we use such a term, is there such a thing as Islamic architecture, or is it more accurate to say the architecture of the Islamic world? An interesting book that comes to my mind is *Observing Islam* by Clifford Geertz. It is very relevant in the context of Indonesia, since he takes the religious beliefs or the popular religion of various groups in Indonesia, and compares them with the popular beliefs of groups in Morocco, and then shows that the diversity of regionalism has produced a great deal of diversity in the way in which these two peoples have looked at religion. The same thing is also applicable to architecture. All we have to do is to put a traditional Indonesian building by the side of a traditional one from Morocco, and I think we will see that what is common between these two is almost nonexistent. I am sure this may be controversial and some may totally disagree, but I think we have to agree whether we want to accept the term "Islamic architecture" or if we want to use another.

The issue of attempting to link the theology of a religion or the science of a culture with its architectural production is a very delicate issue, as we have to establish empirical data that connect the two. In that sense it is very interesting to look at the work of the art historian Panofsky, who has connected scholasticism — the philosophical movement of the medieval period around the twelfth or thirteenth century — with Gothic architecture. He has taken the writings of scholastic philosophers and of people who wrote about architecture, such as Abbott Sujet, and he has shown that there is a correlation and that we can connect, for instance, Christian theology of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with Gothic architecture. We have not done such a thing in the Islamic world yet. We have not explored our scientific background, our historical background, our theological background, and then tried to create very clear links with architecture. Whenever we talk about the two, the empirical data are still lacking and the research is not complete.

#### **Aziz Esmail**

In regard to what Dr. Mohammad al-Asad just said about the difficulty of relating, say, philosophical or religious issues to

architecture, I entirely agree with him. In fact, my view is that you cannot directly ask of an architectural form what philosophical meanings it represents — what this minaret may mean, what this dome may mean, what it may symbolize. I do not think that is the way it can be done. I do not know Panofsky's work that you mentioned, but I doubt whether that is a very successful exercise because it can be a very mechanical one. I think the relation is somewhat more complex, and if we look at architecture as a total thing, as part of a society, as part of human usage, then we have a whole series of questions that are not just technical questions because we are dealing with man. When you deal with man, of course, there will be many issues and many dimensions: there is the economic dimension, there is sexuality, there is power, there is politics, but you will not be able to ignore the spiritual dimension either. And that is why I think that one of the problems of modern discourse is that while it tries to be very liberal, while it says that it is open to all aspects of human life, it in fact can become reductionist. It may say, for example, that the economic aspect is the root of all the other aspects, or the political one is the basis for everything else, while if one proceeds along humanistic lines, focusing on the whole field of culture, then we will have to take account of the multidimensionality of human experience.

### **Hayat Salam**

As an architectural historian, I think that Professor Kuban touched on two issues that are extremely important and need further development. One is that of form and function in Islamic architecture; the other is the meaning within a regional area. We have to remember that traditionally, in Islam, specific functions did not have specific forms attached to them. Forms did not impose a function, and the function did not impose a form. It is only the use of a building that defined its function. I would like to illustrate this with two examples. In terms of regionalism, if we go to Seljuk Anatolia and look at a building — if we forget about the minarets and look at the exterior — we have a portal, we have a whole façade, we know it is an “Islamic monument”, we know it is Anatolia, we know it is the twelfth/thirteenth century, but we cannot tell whether it is a mosque, a madrasah, a *hammam*, a caravanserai, or a hospital. Also if we go to another region, to Iran, where a formal four-iwan plan was developed, typically Iranian, typical of a certain region, we see that this very same plan has been used for madrasahs, for mosques, and for caravanserais alike. So in Islamic architecture, traditionally we do not have forms imposing a meaning. It is the usage of a building that gives it its meaning.

In the same fashion I think the modern State Mosque in Turkey shown by Ismail Serageldin is a perfect contemporary example. Without the minaret, we do not know the function of this building

from a distance. The glass *mihrab* and the water cascade recall shopping malls in the United States and have no Islamic resonance, yet the usage of the building is the only thing that makes it unquestionably a mosque. So there are no forms that necessarily attribute a function, and apart from the minaret, it is only the usage of a monument that gives its specific function.

### **Kemas Madani**

Commenting on form and function in Islamic architecture, I would like to add that while it is true that there is no rule about the form of a building in Islam, there is one about function. According to the Hadith, a building can destroy or cause harm to the owner except if the building is useful. I take it to mean that in Islam buildings must be functional.

### **Akhmad Fanani**

The spiritual experience of an Islamic individual or a community influences its perception of architecture, especially in relation to the functions attached to the built works.

By observing *pesantren* (religious school) communities in Indonesia, it becomes apparent that the occupants of a space can change the function of that space. The *pesantren* communities have learned to live a totally Islamic way of life in a limited space, in a limited environment, and with limited architectural expressions. The community has a sufficient level of understanding of Islamic teachings, and it appreciates and uses architectural facilities without being bound by predefined functions assigned to those facilities. The mosque, for instance, is not only used for prayer but also for discussions and meetings, as a multipurpose area. The same applies to the living quarters in that a room can change functions and be used alternatively for sleeping, studying, exercising. This is to say that the rooms in a *pesantren* are never tied to specific functions.

My question is, therefore, the following: for people with a certain level of spiritual experience, is it necessary to attribute functions to rooms? Taking the essence of Islam, one is bound only to Allah and not to the function of a space, which can be changed at will.

### **Mohammad Danisworo**

I have the impression from this seminar that we Muslims are afraid that we are losing our identity in architectural expressions and that we are frantically looking for ways to save it. I wonder, was there one Islamic architecture in the first place? Is there such a thing as Islamic architecture? So what are we trying to save?

Islamic architecture here in Indonesia, as understood by the general public, consists of buildings which have images of Middle Eastern styles such as arches, domes, minarets, ornamental features, and

inscriptions. I think we should not look at architecture merely as a physical artifact, but, rather, as a socio-cultural artifact, and socio-cultural aspects cannot be generalized, since they differ from country to country and from region to region. I admit, though, that some aspects are becoming more and more globalized owing to technological advances.

Trying to impose the meaning of Islam by imposing or borrowing images from Middle Eastern countries will only produce a pseudo-Islam in architecture. It is the meaning behind an expression that is important and not the resulting form. Form can be anything; it depends on tastes or the ways the designer interprets the teachings of Islam. Therefore, let the relationships between the meaning of Islam and its visual/physical expression be determined by socio-cultural forces of the region, allowing for a rich variety of Islamic architecture that will reflect the Islamic values which are understood and accepted by the people who build and use this architecture.

#### **Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim**

Dr. Serageldin has appropriately chosen a linguistic or semantic approach to review the problem of expressions of Islam in contemporary conditions. I commend the approach, but I want to restate the problem itself to go a bit beyond the relationship between Muslim society and its environment and the role of expressions, as we need to develop an understanding so that we can act to remedy the problem. My comments will address that operational aspect of expression and therefore relate to the theoretical side of the presentation.

First I would like to respond to the idea that Islamic architecture was made through a code and/or through a language, and that Dr. Serageldin was searching to identify some aspects of that code to point to the breaking of that code in order to help us see our way out of the problem. I want to reflect on Islam itself as a code-setting, or as a force that is capable of establishing a code for society. I believe that in this regard we need to recognize that Islam has done that, not simply through the power of faith, but rather through the power of the mind — the creative intellectual power of Muslims who are deeply soaked in the faith. For instance, if it were not for the great mathematician al-Khawarismi, the teachings of the *shari'a* (code of religious laws), with regard to the heritage, would not have become a code. Something very similar also happened in the case of architecture, and here again if it were not for al-Khawarismi and his invention of a way of thinking of quantities in the material world, and the work of other geometricians, the interaction that took place between faith and the environment could not have happened.

Then the code-setting is an operation, is a process which has its roots in the revealed message of the Quran, and in the creative power of the human mind interacting with that revelation through logic.

Now, this abstract product of the mind, whether it is logic or geometry, was not operating in a vacuum. Great masters operated in a context of teaching and societal contacts that spread all the way down to a mode of production. This human level that exists between the revealed text, the revealed material, and the actual production is what I would think of as the community of building, and the culture of building.

My second point has to do with the break or the rupture that took place. I think we need to clarify a number of issues. Pre-industrial architecture did have a break of that order; modernity goes all the way back to the beginning of history and we live today in a modern time that has its roots in history. I am not a historian, but I would just reflect on the fact that the rupture which took place with that code is rooted in my mind to the period of materialistic knowledge. In other words, in each period in which knowledge is articulated into a paradigm, and that paradigm is presented as a materialistic paradigm, the whole world can be understood in mechanistic terms and everything can be described in material terms. This paradigm has been extremely successful because actually it produced very organized sciences that were experimentally valid and therefore gained tremendous success. This idea has gone unchallenged for a very long period of time and now it is challengeable. It is not challengeable because it is Western, or non-Islamic, but it is challengeable on grounds of its own making. In other words, materialism was based on scientific discoveries that dealt with the world experimentally. But we are living now at a time when science, the institution on which the Western world is based, is itself in revision. The real challenge facing us today is whether we as Muslims or as architects can actually give expressions to our time, to the reality of the new physics and the new sciences. I think it is on this ground that the issue has to be defined, and I believe that it is possible.

**Yuswadi Saliya**

I would like to know whether your point on Islam as a code-setting applies to the individual level as well as to the communal level you talk about, since the mind as an intellectual power is usually considered individual?

**Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim**

The operation as a whole is social but the contributions are individual.

**Arif Hasan**

I would like to bring the discussion to a rather mundane level. For me the physical environment of the Islamic world is truly

reflective of the culture of the Islamic world today. Architecture cannot be divorced from contemporary culture, and it is more reflective of the manner in which social and economic changes take place than the process of change itself. This change has been ad hoc, it has been a convenience, it has taken place for specific needs, it has never been thought out, it has not been as a result of a plan, and therefore I think Professor Kuban's division between a dominating Islam and a dominated Islam is very relevant. We have really the emergence of two parallel cultures and most of us belong to both, and we move from one to another with ease. Working with rural and urban low-income settlements over the past decade and a half, I have found that enormous changes have taken place in these societies; yet this change has not been related to religion, to belief, or even to a reinterpretation of history in any way. I find two things in these societies that stop this interchange or this reinterpretation of history: one is the firm belief that Islam is the best and finest manner in which society can be organized; the other is that it is under attack. If we take these two things, this belief in Islam's superiority and this paranoia, then we get a very strong case of schizophrenia. And I feel that unless this is overcome, we cannot relate these changes to our history, and without this, I do not think that we can develop the basis for even assessing our physical environment.

#### **Mohammed Arkoun**

Many words have been used: spirituality, materialism, aesthetics, power, religion, community, code. These are words and concepts that have to be worked out and reconsidered.

Also there is a certain vocabulary that has not yet been used and which should be used. Historicity is one and we call it change. Ali Shuaibi has asked why should we consider change at all. We must consider change because we all live in historical societies. Human beings have historical dimensions, and historicity touches everything including religion, spirituality, and the Quran itself. Professor Kuban has mentioned that what is said in the Quran should be unchangeable. But the Quran itself is engaged in historicity and we find within it the principle of change. Certain revealed verses were replaced by more appropriate or better ones.

There are also new tools, as Aziz Esmail has mentioned, that should be used in order to come out of the dualist framework of thinking that opposes spirituality to materialism, faith to rationality, change to tradition. We need to open another space of thinking to deal with these questions.

Lastly, we must consider myth as opposed to history and historicity. Myth is the centre of human existence and the key to all our discussions, whether we are architects, philosophers, writers, or artists. When we deal with myth, we have also to deal with a

concept that does not exist in the English language and that is *imaginaire*.

### **Ismail Serageldin**

I was given the initial assignment of raising questions and generating debate and I believe we have succeeded beyond our expectations. I would like, however, to make a few comments on method because we may go astray unless we put an end to the use of some notions that keep on appearing. One is whether we are talking about Islam or Muslim society, or Muslim culture, and the difference between the two. I think it is clear from the choice of the plural in the title of this seminar and from our arguments that we are talking about a multiplicity of manifestations. And when we refer to the architecture of Muslim societies, the fact that the societies are plural does not deny the fact they share the characteristics of being Muslim. So I would suggest that we stop raising that issue because it takes us in circles about this notion of whether it is uniquely Islam or not. But having said that, there is a difference between the two; there is still that common thread we need to understand. The Muslim culture generally has spread throughout the world very differently, for example, from the way the Roman culture did. Romans went around building Roman castrums in the sands of Libya or in the snows of Britain in an almost identical fashion — as if somebody had taken a rubber stamp and had gone all over the landscape dotting it with identical structures, with the same orders, the same columns, with the same designs everywhere. And that defines a Roman culture. And when we don't find this manifestation in Muslim culture then we ask whether there is really something to talk about because we have reduced our analytical tools to looking at the physical side. I would argue that what has happened is that Islam, as a system of belief, has affected and interacted with local existing cultures. When architects use patterns and superimpose them, you suddenly see moiré patterns emerge. And some of the moiré patterns may look different from the others, but yet they can be a result of imposing a common thread on a variety of underlining ones. What is required is to go beyond that limited methodology to a more profound methodology. Hence the discussion of the deep structure, of the culture of a society.

I can describe the reality we live in in this room by taking a yardstick, which is a very useful tool, and by measuring the size, the length, the height and describing all the curves in this room. It is a description of the reality, but does not include the temperature or the humidity of the room. Neither of these would be captured by a yardstick. It does not mean that the yardstick is not accurate but that we need other tools; in this analogy it could be a thermometer and a barometer. So we need to complement and go beyond the appearance of buildings. In the case of Muslim society, in fact part



of the genius if you will of Islam is that it allows people to build in a way that is suited to their environment so that it can fit in the dense tropical jungle, as well as in the arid deserts or the cool mountains of the North. I think that trying to limit these manifestations is not an adequate method.

The second point of methodology is the one Dr. Abdelhalim raised about sciences, and what sciences are doing to challenge the paradigm. The challenge of the paradigm started a long time ago. The theory of relativity was put forth in 1905 and quantum mechanics came shortly thereafter. But the real challenge to us today is the societal challenge that is posed by contemporary science. It brings forth the notion again of deep structure in terms of value, ethics, and culture that govern how a society behaves. In the lifetime of our children, but I suspect also in our lifetime, people in this room will see science having the capacity to engineer human beings, à la Brave New World, some happy to be only workers and some (a smaller group of people) happy to be intellectuals. That is the way science and technology are advancing today. But not everything that is technologically possible is desirable, and it is here that the choices of how a society decides to express itself, to organize itself, to make important choices of what it will and what it will not do, raise some profound questions, questions that in fact manifest themselves in myriad ways that we do not know and that touch upon architecture. Today medical science has extended the boundary between life and death to the point where something that used to be clear-cut is no longer so. And as a result, we have developed entire structures in hospitals, special wards that deal with the terminally ill. How to house the very complex machinery is a problem for architects and it involves also trade-offs between such structures and the very simple structures our friends talked about. These kinds of changes that are occurring have to be guided by ethics, and the societal issues that are posed there. Architecture cannot be divorced from that cultural reality. Architecture is a reflection of a society's aspirations and is as much a mirror to that reality as it is to what it does, and that brings me to the third and last point I wish to make about methodology and that is the question of code.

Professor Jale Erzen asked whether a code changes. The answer is certainly yes. It changes because it is not something that is fixed by the giver of the code, like the artist or creator; it is in fact something that is contributed to by the user, by the person who reacts to that activity. Then again, Professor Aziz Esmail raised examples of Shakespeare, for instance, and the multiple readings of Hamlet. Shakespeare wrote Hamlet, but it has been read in multiple ways by different generations and by different cultures and by different societies because each of them has the right to reinterpret the work. Through that reinterpretation they contribute to the creation of a code. In many old-fashioned traditional societies, in the primitive sense that is defined by anthropologists in tribal studies,

these codes have been developed over longer periods of time, and because the pace of change in these societies is not as rapid as it is today, they tended to be seen as being fixed but this is not true. There are always interactions between, for example, the artist creating African masks and the users of these masks who understand how they are used in rituals and how they are adapted in societal transformation. So codes do change, and users have a primary participation in the shaping of that function and how the codes are read in society. I think that on these points of methodology I abide by the compelling advice given by my friend Mohammed Arkoun: help tomorrow's expectations. But I think we should also hope that we can deal with one additional point, the role of women. I notice that a number of speakers when referring to architects have always said "he". I would like to remind people that it is both "he" and "she". I hope in the coming session we shall be able to discuss this additional point because it is a good example of changing stereotypes and perceptions of changing and unchanging aspects.

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**Islamic Cultures, Developing Societies, Modern Thought**  
*Mohammed Arkoun*

**Comments**  
*Soetjipto Wirosardjono*

**Discussion**  
*Darrundono, Mohammed Arkoun, Meer Mobashsher Ali,  
Dogan Kuban, Mohammed Arkoun, Martin Frishman,  
Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim, Mohammed Arkoun, Michael  
Sumarijanto, Ismail Serageldin*

## Islamic Cultures, Developing Societies, Modern Thought

*Mohammed Arkoun*

*They all err — Muslims, Christians, Jews and Magians  
Two make humanity's universal sect:  
One man intelligent without religion,  
And one religious without intellect.*

Abu-al-'Ala al-Ma'arri (d. 449/1057)

Today the list of people who all err would include secularists as well. We are always in need of critical inquiry about the relevance, the usefulness, and the righteousness of our various expressions as members of a society, a community, a history.

During the last twelve years, the Aga Khan Award for Architecture has developed and illustrated an encompassing understanding of the expressions of Islam in its classical age as well as in its contemporary trends. The ultimate goal of this endeavour has never been to build a model of an Islamic architecture and to impose it all over the Muslim world; on the contrary, the constant concern of so many architects, historians, social scientists, thinkers already involved in the Aga Khan Award for Architecture has been to encourage and practise a free critical inquiry on three major points:

- the historical objective knowledge of the classical legacy of what is called Islamic culture and civilization, or *turath* in Arabic; the idea is not to compete with the established scholarship in this field, but to reflect on the relevance, the meaning, and the results of the continuous reference made today to this classical legacy as the model for the contemporary expressions of "Islam" as a whole (religion, culture, civilization).
- the dominant forces, models, conceptions, achievements which are actually at work and are spread today throughout all Muslim societies and which are not related at all to the claimed ideal model; in other words, the built environment and the cultural expressions of "Islam" are subjected to an irresistible process of deterioration, disintegration, destruction.
- the identification of new ways, new methodologies, new conceptions, new tools, to provide for an enabling culture and thought that would stop the process of rupture with the classical legacy, would help to recognize the living tradition, and, at the same time, would contribute to the invention of modernity in Muslim societies.

This approach, including a long-term historical perspective and a free but critical acceptance of all the challenges of modernity, is probably unique as far as Muslim societies are concerned. It is not to be found in any known type of scholarship — Muslim or orientalist — in any tradition of teaching, in any private foundation or trend of thinking. That is why the Aga Khan Award for Architecture is so conscious of its responsibility and so eager to go further in the path successfully traced over a decade.

To start the fifth cycle we need to strike a balance between what has been achieved and what must be done urgently. But, as soon as we raise such a question, we face one of the most recurrent and challenging difficulties in the contemporary evolution of the Muslim world as a whole: the fact that unexpected major events suddenly emerge and change the mental map, necessitating decision-makers as well as thinkers and scholars to try to insert their views on the present evolution. During the last twelve years I would single out two events on this revolutionary scale: the rise of Khomeini's power in Iran and the present crisis in the Gulf. If, in addition to this, we consider the collapse of Communist regimes, the rapid reunification of Germany, and the 1993 horizon of Europe, we face the urgent necessity to consider the discourse on the rich tradition and the brilliant civilization of "Islam" in the light of the *shock of the future*.

How are Muslim societies going to express themselves during the next decade? In which international "order", in which intellectual and cultural context, will the various expressions of different societies take place? What is the future course of the struggle between "Islam" and the "West" that has been going on since the nineteenth century, or even since the competition between Byzance and "Islam", between Western Christianity and "Islam"?

These questions are in order because of the Western mass media. They affect daily the representations of "Islam", "Arabs", in the collective Western consciousness. On the other hand, millions of Muslims are developing also a strong ideological vision (*imaginaire*) with regard to the West. Is there any way, any possibility, of conceiving an architectural and urban expression of Muslim societies outside this constraining context of mutual exclusion, militant ideologies, explicit strategies of domination?

Let us try a clarification of these issues, the aim of our endeavour being to enlarge and protect the range of freedom for the sake of a more efficient creativity in the contemporary expressions of "Islam". We will start with a new elaboration of the concept of "Islam". We will then examine its main expressions during the last forty years, thus enabling us to trace some potential directions of implementation in the next decade.

### **1. The Concept of Islam: Attempt at a Reappraisal**

We can no longer use the word "Islam" without quotation marks. It has been so misused and distorted by the media, Muslims themselves, and political scientists that we need a radical reworking of the concept. We have to wrest a modern critical definition of Islam from the ideological and mythological interpretations imposed by political Muslim movements and promoted further by Western militant forces.

The main distortions are due to Muslims themselves. The critical scientific approach to religion as a universal phenomenon has been practically ignored in Islamic thought since Shahrastani (d. 548/1153), the famous author of the *Book of Religions and Sects*.<sup>1</sup> Shahrastani was open to other religions, but he looked at them from the dogmatic concept of Islam as the true religion (*religio vera* in Christian theology). This attitude was commonly shared during medieval times by all Jewish, Christian, and Muslim thinkers and scholars. Whereas in Europe the scientific interpretation of religion in a secularized context started in the sixteenth century with the Lutheran Reform and the Renaissance, in all Muslim societies a scholastic, redundant, rigid “orthodoxy” imposed an increasingly narrow vision of Islam itself. I mean that the pluralist, liberal expressions of Islam from the many competing schools which flourished from the first to the sixth centuries (seventh to twelfth centuries, C.E.) have been forgotten, eliminated in each country through the pressure of one *official* school of Law. Today, when Muslims claim to restore the “authentic”, “original” Islam, they all actually refer to a monolithic, impoverished, narrower Islam, cut off from the rich intellectual debates among powerful thinkers during the classical period.

This historical fact is quietly ignored by the overwhelming majority of architects and planners who claim to rehabilitate, preserve, restore, or create an architecture, an urban environment, “in the spirit of Islam”. My point is not that they should go back to classical Islamic culture and thought and re-create the medieval context in our modern world. The issue is not at all the current opposition between Modernity and Tradition with its nostalgic discourse on the lost beauty and grandeur of “Islamic Civilization”. On the contrary, we have to recognize that the classical expressions of Islam cannot be repeated today. This is a structural impossibility because all the semiological systems through which these expressions — in architecture, urbanism, painting, music, sculpture, literature, theology, law, crafts, costumes, festivals — have been conceived and delivered are either destroyed or have disintegrated in contemporary societies.

Confining ourselves to Islam as a religion, we must go further in this semiological statement: the exegesis of the Quran itself, the interpretation of Law, the understanding of the traditions of the Prophet (Hadith), not to mention the theological and juridical systems elaborated during the classical period, *have no longer an intellectual relevance* to the modern scientific context. This contention will certainly hurt the “fundamentalists” who are, sociologically, the majority of Muslims today. This is the biggest practical difficulty we presently face, even in the context of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. Let me explain very carefully how delicate is the issue and how urgent is a solution for an effective emancipation of Islamic thought and creativity.

The expressions of Islam over the last twenty years (a period marked by the death of Nasser on 28 September 1970, the beginning of Sadat's so-called *Infatih* [ouverture] politics, and Khomeini's revolution in 1979) have been dominated by two forces: (1) the State-Nation-Party, which monopolized everywhere the ideological control of all kinds of expressions: cultural, intellectual, artistic, architectural, urban, agricultural, religious; (2) the civil society, which is strictly controlled by the State-Nation-Party and looks for devices to contest the legitimacy of this control and to conquer some space for its own expressions.

This is an opposition between the State with its army, police, media network, and technocratic administration and the civil society, who have been deprived of democratic participation in political, economic, and cultural arenas. In the struggle between these two forces religion plays a major role. It is the source of legitimacy for the political order —that is why the State controls religious expressions through a Ministry of Religious Affairs (or other official bodies) — and the civil society uses the teachings of religion on justice, brotherhood, human rights, to point to the tyranny of the State. Both forces compete, for example, in building new mosques, in promoting religious schools and education, in organizing meetings and conferences. Both are eager to control the symbolic capital for opposite reasons: the State wants to consolidate its legitimacy; the civil society seeks emancipation, security, a just distribution of resources.

This ideological competition has led to the most visible and impressive expressions of Islam during the last twenty years. A great number of mosques are being built by states, villages, private sponsors, associations, municipalities. The style, the quality, the size of each mosque, as well as its integration into the built environment, its functions, its success, or its failure, are determined by changing factors and programmes. A small association, a rich patron, a rural village, an uprooted populist group in a large city have different cultural references, particular needs, specific goals, which affect not only the building as a piece of architecture, but the expression of the faith itself. I shall come back to this important point when I shall deal with populism.

The example of mosques shows clearly how a religion is shaped, used, even manipulated by society, even though the traditional conception maintains that it is religion that shapes society and commands its history. In a theoretical discussion on the origin, the nature, the functions of religion in general, two opposite positions are still claimed by scientists: positivists on one side, orthodox believers on the other. Of course, the majority of Muslims do not enter into this discussion; the theory of religion in the perspective of a philosophy of religion is still unthinkable for conservative Muslims.

This does not change the fact that Islam, like any other religion, is changing under the pressure of secularizing forces introduced with industrialization, urbanization, a modern economic system of production and exchange, banking, scientific teaching, the transfer of Western juridical codes, migration from rural areas to cities, democratization, the move from popular to populist culture and organization. "Islam" becomes a language which legitimizes secularization in practice, while condemning and rejecting it in theory. When sermons in the mosques deal with political and economic issues, instead of explaining how to incarnate spiritual values in a materialistic civilization, they contribute to the strong trend leading Muslims to secularize religion, while at the same time being against secularism.

Can one assert that in the beginning Islam was more clearly oriented towards spirituality, divine experience, faith in God and Revelation according to the teachings of the Quran, or was it, as today, mixed with mundane activities, profane life, political struggle? Again, the answer of the traditional believer is that Islam, from its very birth, was and remains the true transcendent religion revealed by God; the critical scientist, on the contrary, claims that all religions, even as they emerge, are a mixture of spiritual experience and ideological elaborations produced and used by social agents for their own purposes. The ideological elements are continuously changing with the social, cultural, political context, whereas the spiritual ethos is preserved and operates over generations.

In fact, we do not have the choice of relying on one theory rather than on the other. Today, as we said, spirituality is marginalized and presented as a purely subjective claim; religion is cut off from its origins, its great thinkers, those who would defend it against the attempt to transform it into a weapon, a springboard for personal, profane ambitions. There is a literary genre devoted to this opposition between the "authentic", "original" faith, the "true religion", and the "wrong" interpretations, the "bad" use made of religion. I am not at all repeating this preaching, moralizing discourse; my concern is to introduce into contemporary Islamic thought a historical, sociological, psychological approach to religion as a complex phenomenon subjected to the creative, changing initiatives of what in sociology is called *social agents*. This concept is neutral; it can refer to all kinds of behaviour, all initiatives of each individual in the society in which he lives, whereas if we say *believer*, we refer only to a specific social agent with a specific behaviour related to *his* own understanding of religion.

Only with this pluralistic, flexible, open approach to religion, can we identify and explain the changing expressions of Islam throughout history, as well as in each society considered in a given period of its evolution. Expressions of Islam are not the same in Indonesia, Morocco, Senegal, or France. They also change in the same society: Islam does not have the same expression among contemporary



Moroccans or Egyptians as it did among those of the tenth or sixteenth century. One may object that the Five Pillars — *shahada*, prayer, *zakat*, fasting, pilgrimage— are the same for all Muslims and that this is the unchanging core of Islam. Yes, this is the *ritual* expression of worship according to Islam. But worship is the common element for all religions; the ritual gestures can themselves be traced back historically to various rituals in ancient India, Iran, the Near East, the Mediterranean.

According to this historical perspective, all the other expressions currently qualified as “Islamic” or “Muslim” should be first described as *cultural* and interpreted through a large anthropological vision going from the local to the global, and vice versa, from the global to the local.

Let us take an example to establish this important methodological argument. Privacy is currently used as a constraining “Islamic” reference in designing a house, in tracing the streets in a city, to avoid any contact of women with public spaces. We know how many architects obey rich sponsors who impose dogmatic norms labelled as “Islamic”. This happens especially when architects are non-Muslims: they do not dare to discuss the Islamic character of the demands presented by “Muslims”. Actually the concept of privacy goes back far before the emergence of Islam. In the Mediterranean area it is linked to the climate more than to any religious teaching, but Christian conceptions of chastity and ancient customs relating sexuality to the “honour” of the family and the clan have also created and generalized a “religious” mentality, which has been substituted as a constraining norm for the ecological reality.

Many examples like this can be given not only in architecture and urbanism, but also in literature, philosophy, fashion in dress, food prohibitions, music, dance, agricultural customs, and even signals such as beards, moustaches, short or long hair, etc. In France, during November-December 1989 a very strange conflict concerning the so-called Islamic scarf emerged and mobilized all members of the French government. A passionate polemic between famous intellectuals, politicians, and religious authorities revealed a total confusion between symbols, signs, and signals as fundamental elements used in all societies to express changing messages through changing semiological systems.

The same confusion occurs constantly in our discussions in all the seminars organized by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. It reveals a cultural and psychological boundary separating, even in our so-called “modern” time, what I call the *thinkable* and the *unthinkable*. A semiological and anthropological approach to all levels of expression in a given society — religious, cultural, moral, aesthetic, juridical — is still *unthinkable* even for many people trained in institutes of higher education and universities. Can we imagine a surgeon operating with tools used in the tenth or twelfth century? Concepts are the tools of social scientists but the inherited concepts

regarding religion and philosophy going back to medieval times are still used by many scholars, not only by other people. We still use the dualist framework opposing spiritual to temporal, rational to irrational, reason to faith, secular to religious, sacred to profane, nature to culture, tradition to modernity, etc.

The mental boundary just mentioned can also be illustrated by all the commentaries, interpretations, and polemic discourses emanating from the West since 2 August 1990, the beginning of the Gulf Crisis. How are Islam and Arabs represented in the West and how is the West represented in Arab countries?

Nevertheless, we must cross the boundary to make thinkable the yet unthinkable for the majority of people. We need, as I said, to enable Muslim societies to express themselves during the next decade, not in the ideological style imposed on them by Western hegemony in the economic, cultural, technological domains, but in a spirit of intellectual and scientific responsibility, with Islam as the dominant issue for everyone.

## 2. Expressions of “Islam”

I shall not insist on architectural and urban expressions because this is done frequently by architects and planners with their own style and concerns. I need only point out once again that in this context, references to “Islam” should take into account all that I have just said concerning semiological, anthropological, sociological, and psychological approaches. A good example of some architects’ confusion is the Hajj Terminal in Jeddah. I remember the discussion among members of the Master Jury about the tent form as being Islamic or rather an adapted response of Bedouins to the ecological constraints of the desert long before Islam.

Apart from architecture and urbanism, the expressions of Islam in the last forty years can be related to the following fields:

- Ritual expressions: religious obligations; festivals; local worship, saints, pilgrimages; celebrations and ceremonies of birth, marriage, death; hospitality; division of space and time into sacred and profane.
- Ecological expressions: geography of the sacred; relation to nature to the universe; moon, sun, mountains, rain, land; the concept of creation applied to all beings (many verses in the Quran deal with natural beings as *created* beings); here, we discover a radical change in our look at beings and at the Universe due to scientific explanations and methodology.
- Artistic expressions: prohibited arts (painting, sculpture, theatre, music, dance) are now practised as secular expressions; licit arts of arabesques, calligraphy, illuminated design; intoned Quran. It is important to notice how the illicit arts are now successful and contribute to the secularization of the cultural life.

- Semiological expressions: costumes, gestures, body attitudes, furniture, cooking, smells, spices, jewellery. How do religious beliefs affect all these cultural expressions?
- Literary expressions: poetry, novels, short stories; movies are still controlled by “orthodox” authorities, but have long contributed to the movement of secularization as, for example, in the case of the Salman Rushdie affair and novels of Nagib Mahfuz.
- Didactic expressions: religious schools and universities; faculties of theology; teaching of religion in public schools.
- Intellectual expressions: essays, scholarship, seminars, conferences, journals; an enormous literature generally devoid of modern criticism and dominated by an apologetic spirit.
- Juridical expressions: these are a part of intellectual expressions, but the struggle to restore the *shari’a*, religious law, requires a special activity linked to political issues and life.
- Political expressions: this is the most visible and effective aspect of all the expressions of Islam especially since the triumph of the Iranian revolution, called the Islamic Revolution. All the other expressions are more or less affected by political priorities. For this reason, we prefer always to write “Islam” with quotation marks; it is now difficult to isolate a spiritual content from the politicized Islam.

This enumeration gives an idea of the variety of fields which require scientific exploration but it is methodologically unsatisfactory. There are many links among the types enumerated and we need, above all, to understand how the combination of these expressions creates a climate, a whole context of life, shaping the sensibility of each individual brought up in this sphere certified as *Islamic*, while an analysis of each expression shows a constant interference between the religious and the secular, the sacred and the profane. Only the ritual expressions have a good degree of autonomy; the rest are invaded by secular forces which are not themselves totally free from symbolic concerns. This means that we need to rethink and re-evaluate the fields of the religious, the secular, the political, the intellectual.

We are used to repeating and to hearing that “Islam” does not make any distinction between religion and politics, religious and secular. It is claimed by all Islamist movements that Islam is religion, state, and earthly life: *Din, Dawla, Dunya*. This is true as long as we refuse to submit to scientific analysis all the types of expressions listed. If we undertake this analysis, we discover that the proposition: “Islam is *Din, Dawla, Dunya*”, is a mere slogan to mobilize the masses for political struggle.

We must deepen our interpretation and start from the radical notions common to all types of expression. I mean the positive reality on one side, and the semiotic elements used to express the changing perceptions of this positive reality on the other; the semiotic elements being: symbols, signs, signals. To this, we need to add the

anthropological categories of the sacred, the profane, the rational, the visionary, the mythical, and the historical.

It would be a very long and complicated exercise if we were to give a detailed study of these elements and categories. But we must accept, especially in the context of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, that all our endeavour to elucidate the problems of contemporary Muslim societies through architecture, depends, for its success, on acceptable and usable answers to the questions and notions mentioned. Without these answers we may rely on or even use, the slogans, the confusing “explanations”, the dogmatic statements, imposed on us by the dominant “Islamic” discourse; there is also the danger of referring only to the literature known as “classical Islamology” (*Islamwissenschaft*). The scientific reliability of this literature is discussed among specialists and one has to be careful about each reference.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Islam in the Next Decade

Whatever has been the real impact of “Islam” on the different fields of expression during the last thirty years, there is no doubt that a big change will take place in the next decade. The secularist trend will not only be predominant; but one can predict that it will be expressed more explicitly, more independently of the religious vocabulary. The ideological contention that Islam will resist modernism more successfully than Christianity has is already inconsistent with the recent evolution.

The fact is that intellectual and scientific expressions of Islamic thought is still limited to a few books published by isolated scholars, Muslims and non-Muslims. Ancient texts written by great classical thinkers are edited but not yet studied with the new scientific tools and methodologies I have mentioned. A renowned German scholar, J. van Ess, has just finished a monumental history of Islamic theology during the first period of its development (first to third centuries, seventh to ninth centuries, C.E.). This work will certainly change our view and our interpretations of the initial elaborations of Islam as a religion, a tradition of thought, a law; it will impose on Muslims historicity as a dimension of religion which is currently represented as a transcendent and unchangeable teaching. This intellectual event was similarly imposed on Christian thought by historians in the nineteenth century. It was the *modernist crisis* in Christianity; Christian theologians rejected the historicity of the revelation of faith and of dogmatic beliefs just as Muslims are rejecting it today. Through passionate debates between theologians and historians, philosophers and sociologists, Christian thought became more and more open to modernity and had to integrate historicity as a dimension of all human activities and ideas. A critique of theological reason nevertheless took a long time, even in Christianity, to be tolerated by the official orthodoxy. This struggle is intellectual; one

can consider that it is not finished even in Western societies where secularism is so widely accepted that scholarship has been developed outside the control of the Church.

In Muslim societies today the sociological context of the same intellectual struggle is characterized by three major negative driving forces: the State-Nation-Party; populism; international strategies for geopolitical control.

These three forces can be in themselves the subject of three comprehensive books. They have determined the evolution of Muslim societies in the last thirty years. They will still play a determinant role in the next decade. I shall limit any analysis here to the most visible facts.

### **The State-Nation-Party**

This encompassing concept, assembling in one combination three notions which should be distinguished, is the product of a historical and sociological necessity after 1945.

The first historical necessity is the struggle for independence. All Muslim countries have been colonized directly or indirectly by Western powers; an ideology of liberation has been developed and spread, leading to the emergence of leaders who assumed historical dimensions like Sukarno, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Nasser, Bourguiba, Allal al-Farsi, Ben Bella, Boumediène, Khomeini, and now Saddam Hussein.

The core of this ideology, which features in all the leaders' discourse, is that each colonized entity is a nation whose identity has been impaired by the colonial system and must, therefore, be *restored* under the leadership of a state incarnating the values, the authenticity, the historical personality of the *nation*. The State itself is, in fact, run by one historical leader assisted by a "central committee" or a "political bureau" on the model of a "democratic popular republic" which does not tolerate more than one party. That is why we have an ideological pack of strategies, organizations, manipulations, "values" suggested with my graphic presentation in the formula *State-Nation-Party*.

The more the State claims to incarnate the true nation and to build it through a national effort conducted by a devoted, militant, illuminated-illuminating party, the more a gap between the ideological State and the civil society (different from the postulated nation) is deepened. During the Gulf Crisis, it was clear that civil societies (called *sha'b*, "people", in Arabic) had positions different from the official ones taken by the states. In fact, the cleavage goes back far into the past and is included in the origins of the new states that emerged through wars of liberation and were established to run the "construction of each nation".

Democratic experiences have been tolerated for the last two or three years in some countries. The example of Algeria since the revolt

of October 1988 is very illuminating on the responsibilities of the State-Nation-Party over thirty years. Other examples could be considered.

### Populism

This has been the most powerful and overwhelming driving force in all so-called Muslim societies since the late fifties. It is related to the demographic phenomenon, combined with the State-Nation-Party and international strategies for economic conquest of the best markets.

Since 1960, for the first time in their history, all Muslim societies from Indonesia to Morocco have had their population at least doubled, tripled in some cases. In Algeria and Morocco, more than 65 percent of the population is less than thirty years old. This is an enormous force, generating dangerous situations and presenting a number of challenges not yet correctly analyzed and faced.

As far as contemporary expressions of Islam, one may state that populism had and will have in the next decade a most decisive impact. How can this be explained?

As described by one of the numerous official texts produced by successive F.L.N. congresses in Algeria, the ideal citizen is as follows:

“La politique d’éducation et de formation doit être fondée sur les principes idéologiques suivants: ... l’éducation religieuse doit préparer les générations futures à la connaissance complète et juste de l’Islam dans ses deux dimensions, religieuse et civilisatrice, étant donné que l’Islam est l’une des composantes fondamentales de notre personnalité civilisatrice et qu’il est la religion de la lutte, de la rigueur, de la justice et de l’égalité. Cette éducation a pour mission d’expliquer les raisons profondes du déclin du monde musulman qui se doit de dépasser la phase du réformisme pour rentrer de plein-pied dans la Révolution sociale.”<sup>3</sup>

This text is difficult to translate into English because it is typical of the empty rhetoric of “revolutionary” discourse used by the militants in charge of the “revolutionary legacy”. We shall see how it corresponds to the populist vision (*imaginaire*) and how it will generate a devastating ideology called the “return to Islam”, or the restoration of Islamic Law, or, more officially, the *Islamic Front for Salvation*. Of course, I would not insist on this quotation if not for the fact that it brings out the permanent structuring images of the worldwide so-called Islamic vision (*imaginaire*).

To provide another illuminating example of the manifestations of the populist vision, which can be also found in Egypt, Syria, Pakistan, Iran. This is the story of the chapel in Khroub, a small rural village sixteen kilometres south of Constantine, Algeria. As in many colonial villages, the chapel was built by French Christians before independence, and, as in many cases, “revolutionary” militants wanted to destroy all “symbols” of colonialism, regardless

of the religious expression of some of them. Actually, rich religious *symbols* became, in the context of the nationalist ideology, intolerable *signals* of the colonial system. In the beginning of 1976, a young member of the National Union of Algerian Youth (UNJA) destroyed the cross of the chapel in the presence of a crowded, happy, enthusiastic assembly. The chapel, nevertheless, was preserved and used as a shelter for victims of natural disasters (violent storms, hard winters) until 1986. In February 1986, a decision was made to transform the chapel into a public library with a cultural centre. A part of the chapel was demolished to enlarge the building. Once the new building was completed, so-called *mujahidin* (fighters for independence; in fact young members of the local F.L.N. branch who had never participated in the Independence War but who bid higher and higher to show their nationalist devotion) imposed the necessity of totally sweeping away the remnants of colonialism and setting up in the place a stele for the martyrs of independence. What had been a charming shaded garden was destroyed and in December 1986 the stele without any architectural style like many others, all over the country — pure signals of devastating ideology — was officially inaugurated in Khroub.<sup>4</sup>

As we see, aggression against the built environment has been perpetrated many years after independence (1962) by young generations corresponding to the aforementioned demographic wave. The young militants did not participate in the historical consciousness of the true *mujahidin*, nor did they have any understanding of the new needs and aspirations of the transformed Algerian society.

The populist phenomenon contributes precisely to the continuous deterioration by dogmatic, bureaucratic militants of the built environment, as well as to the disintegration of the traditional, strong, efficient cultural and ethical code of the *rural* and nomadic society, known as the *popular*, as opposed to the elitist, section of society. For centuries popular culture in all societies had a very efficient integrating role. It instilled and perpetuated ethical, aesthetic, and political values from which an intellectual, sophisticated, elitist, urban culture has always drawn its best inspiration. The distinction between elites and masses — *Khassa/‘Amm* or *‘Awamm* — has been commonly shared, used, and imposed in the whole Mediterranean area since the medieval period by Islamic as well as Christian thought. The reformist movement which started in the nineteenth century in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt has been an urban, elitist, learned, “orthodox” expression of Islam directly opposed to the so-called *popular* Islam, considered as superstitious, heterodox. This is a deep, ancient anthropological cleavage between urban and rural spaces.

The totally new phenomenon of populism, which started to increase during the sixties, is tied to the collapse of urban as well as rural/nomadic expressions of the society as a whole. The already well-rooted urban ideology, marginalizing and disqualifying the so-called popular culture and political order, became more devastating when

the State-Nation-Party invaded by bureaucratic, disrooted militants imposed its decisions on the whole country and implemented its conceptions, borrowed from the so-called socialist model, on all levels, all sectors of the civil society. For example, the so-called “agrarian revolution” in Egypt with Nasser, Algeria with Boumediène, Tunisia with Ben Salah (immediately stopped by Bourguiba during the seventies) aggravated the disintegration of rural culture and life, the exodus of peasants and nomads to the big cities. In turn, their society has deteriorated, having been cut off from their traditional structure, culture, and political and social order. Populism is thus a general, invading wave affecting the sustaining systems of values at all levels and in all ways of expression going back very far into the past, very deep into the collective vision (*imaginaire*) and psyche.

This evolution, as we see, is a complex, encompassing phenomenon including, of course, religion as just one factor among others affected in the same way by populism. It is important to notice that Islam is a *dependent* and not a leading independent force in the evolution we are describing. This is precisely the opposite of what we are used to repeating and “explaining” under the impact of the so-called Islamic fundamentalist discourse.

### **International Strategies for Geopolitical Control**

As I am writing these lines, the Gulf Crisis has reached its climax. This is not the place to deal with the crisis itself, but one of the positive aspects of this major event is that it shows more clearly than any other previous confrontation what has to be described and criticized as the international strategies for geopolitical control. This expression is long, but precise. It avoids the ideological vocabulary still used by dominated societies — all contemporary Muslim societies — and it points to a decisive, not yet perceived, opposition between what I shall call *meaning* and *power*, or, more clearly, the values at stake and the strategies of power in world history after 1945.

Which spiritual, ethical, and cultural values were really at stake when the Great Powers met at Yalta and divided the world, and, at the same time, the United Nations was created as a world assembly in charge of implementing peace, a political and economic order for all nations?

Until the symbolic destruction of the Wall in Berlin, the Cold War inspired, allowed, and legitimized all kinds of “hot” conflicts and, beyond that, a balance based on terror, on dissuasive military powers. Small, underdeveloped, poor nations and ethnic groups have been the instruments, the mediators, the innocent victims of an ongoing, cynical, immoral, destructive competition between East and West, the communist world and the free world. The Arabic world linked to the Mediterranean area, to a particularly rich stock of religious and cultural symbols, has suffered from this wild,



obscure, inhuman competition since 1945. The creation of the state of Israel in 1948 has to be related to this competition, these pressing strategies for geopolitical control through the United Nations as well as in each country. To these devastating ideologies can also be attributed the Suez expedition, the 1967 War, 1973 War, and all the tragedies in the Middle East. But, at the same time, one must emphasize that Jewish history, which ended in the creation of the state of Israel, remains the most challenging test of what I call the struggle between meaning and power. Jews have suffered for centuries in "the name of God" under Christian and Muslim powers acting as well in "the name of God". But Jews never had a state, let alone an empire, as Christianity and Islam did. Jews suffered, fought, stood witness for spiritual values, for meaning (I do not put any value judgement on the philosophical relevance of this meaning; I take meaning as a psycho-social-cultural value inspiring individuals and communities in their choices and behaviours) as minorities under the domination of majorities. This special dialectic shaped the history of Jewish people until 1948. Because this history took place in the Mediterranean area, Israel as a state and Palestine as a people deprived of their land have become since 1948 the symbols of the ongoing struggle between meaning and power. I do not say that meaning is on one side, power on the other. The Gulf Crisis again presents the issue in all its intricate elements. It represents an overwhelming concentration of all the wars, the conflicts, the oppressions, and the injustice, but also includes the rich symbols, the precious cultural legacy, which gives to the Mediterranean area its very specific place in the history of civilizations, as well as in the geopolitical evolution imposed on the world since 1945. Atlantic historical solidarity has replaced the hard competition among European powers, especially France and Great Britain, to control Mediterranean countries. The expedition to punish Nasser in 1956 was the last significant episode of that European competition, which was stopped and transferred thereafter to the superpowers. The present Gulf Crisis reveals an implicit, discrete effort towards a readjustment between a European view and an American ambition on what should be an International Order, starting with the Middle East.

It is clear from the present events that the Arab world is an integrated part of the Mediterranean area: as a cultural legacy shared by Europe and as a geopolitical and economic space exploited by the West for its own benefit and by the elite of some Arab countries cut off, as we saw, from their civil societies. Khomeini, the so-called Islamic Revolution, Saddam Hussein, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, and Israel are just some of the actors and episodes of an unmastered, not yet objectively analyzed tragedy. With the exception of the dramatic destiny of some innocent hostages, the tragedy affects Arab people collectively, but not necessarily Arab states. On the Western side, the tragedy is not even presented and perceived as a collective

tragedy by the mass media, and, consequently, by public opinions shaped by the mass media and official discourse. For example, the expression “logic of war” used by President F. Mitterrand is received and accepted as relevant and unavoidable in the situation created in the Gulf. Only a few citizens wish to correct and balance the expression “logic of war” by the expression “logic of peace”. A very strong, widespread negative image of Arabs and “Islam” is imposed all over the West. This is the result of a long-term process since 1945; it is not explained as the result of continuous action and reaction between the great powers and the newly independent states more and more separated from their civil societies. Western states deal with so-called independent states on an unequal basis, regardless of the urgent needs, expectations, attitudes of civil societies — or peoples — on the Third World side. States run history as private clubs run their own affairs; Western states are worried by unemployment, inflation, income, security, and comfort of the citizens only to win elections. Third World states, and among them those Arab states more strongly dependent on the West for their survival, are bothered by their lack of legitimacy as long as they remain unable to introduce an authentic democracy.

On both sides, voices for a new cultural order, a new education system based on the search for a modern understanding of contemporary issues, for an ethical order freely accepted by people and not only negotiated by states, for the continuous implementation of a *logic of peace* founded on the prevailing value of the spiritual vocation of each person, for the respect of the natural environment in all parts of the earth, these voices are few, weak, isolated, scattered, unheard or even disdained by all the decision-makers. When and where democracy is totally ignored, where and when human rights are rejected and daily violated, where and when arrogant bureaucratic regimes are in power, the voices are totally silenced; they become *Hutaf al-Samitin* according to the subtle title of a book by an Egyptian sociologist, Sayyid ‘Uways. *Hutaf al-Samitin*, “the whispering of the silenced”, is actually the voice of the masses, the majority of people who have no access to any form, any type, any way of expression; not even to the official, imposed language, the Arabic written language mastered by the elite, but ignored by the masses who speak dialects unwritten and unused at school and in all significant official spheres of life. This same situation can also be found in other countries and with other languages.

This situation may, however, change rapidly and radically in a very short period. New and powerful energies are ready to take over and to engage people in a totally new system of solidarities. This will depend again on the political will of all the nations assembled in the Gulf to impose an international order: an order based on an ethical authority exercised by the United Nations to help poor countries on their way to democracy and emancipation, or an order perpetuating the structural violence imposed on the world since 1945.

This is the radical historical option made possible by the Gulf Crisis. It is the honour of the Aga Khan Award to endeavour towards a new history by calling upon all people in all countries to work in the line of the *logic of peace*.

#### **Notes**

1. The book was recently published in a very richly annotated French translation by D. Gimaret and G. Monnot, UNESCO-Peeters, 1986.
2. Cf. M. Arkoun, "Pour une islamologie appliquée", in *Critique de la raison islamique* (Paris 1984), and "Les expressions actuelles de l'islam", in *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, s.v., *Islam*.
3. 4th Congress of F.L.N. in Algiers, 27-31 March 1989; text to be found in *Revue algérienne* 16, no. 2 (1989): 404.
4. Cf. Ahmed Rouadjia, *La Construction des mosquées à Constantine, 1962-84*, Thèse Paris VII, 1989, II, pp. 354-355.

## Comments

*Soetjipto Wirosardjono*

The issue of contemporary expressions of Islam involves a critical inquiry on reality as well as on the process and the continuity of the so-called Islamic expression. In my view, to speak of contemporary expressions, one cannot escape from the notion of looking at one end of the tradition-modernity continuum. This continuum indeed constitutes a typical phenomenon of contemporary expressions of any subculture. My own premise in assessing the pace of change in Islamic expression is the prevailing triangle of social forces: forces of change, forces of harmony, and forces of progress. The process itself, I would be inclined to believe, is affected not only by the external dynamics which formed the focus of Professor Arkoun's presentation but also the internal dynamics in the Islamic community itself. I would therefore like to complement what Professor Arkoun has elaborated by paying special attention to the internal dynamics of Islam itself.

I should like to mention briefly the trouble that we Indonesians face, by living in the peripheral Islamic community, in convincing our Western colleagues — who are scholars in Islamic studies — to avoid equating “Islamic” with “Mediterranean” or “Arab”. I would think that the “Islamic” expression in Professor Arkoun's discussion refers to the Mediterranean or Arab society only. From that reference point Indonesians will always feel on the periphery of Islamic society.

For that reason I disagree with Professor Arkoun's observation that “the pluralist, liberal expressions of Islam from the many competing schools of thought which flourished from the first to the sixth centuries, have been forgotten” and with his characterization of Islam as “a monolithic, impoverished, narrower Islam, cut off from the rich intellectual debate among powerful thinkers during the classical period”. I have personally witnessed the very phenomenon among young Muslim scholars in Indonesia in particular and also in Iran (which he has eliminated with the example of Nasser in Pakistan), indicating a revival of the intellectual search among Muslim scholars. The issue of architectural expressions and planning is not one of modernity versus tradition per se, but the issue of whether Islamic architecture and planning are capable of grasping the symbolic, functional, and artistic dimensions of Islamic culture in its physical form.

I feel immediately intimidated with the charge of being perceived as a fundamentalist when I sincerely disagree with the qualification of Professor Arkoun that the Quran itself, the Hadith, and the theological and judicial systems “have no longer an intellectual relevance to the modern scientific context”. While it is true that in Islam, as in any other culture, the intellectual and rational do not constitute the whole spectrum of cultural ramifications, Islamic culture should be appreciated on an intellectual and spiritual basis. Values, norms, and ethical dimensions should be viewed on an equal basis with the considerations of rational and intellectual levels. These

spiritual and emotional forces underlying the dynamics of expression should be taken into consideration by an architect or planner wanting to reflect upon the “spirit” which underlies Islamic social expression.

While it is valid to assume the monopoly of expression by the state-nation and the party, the point elaborated in Professor Arkoun’s last argument is equally true empirically: that in almost all Islamic societies there is a persistent dichotomy in cultural perception and expression between the state and the society. The expressions of a society are not necessarily always represented by the expressions of the ruling elite. This interaction and discourse always take place between the two components in all Islamic societies, the least democratic included.

Communication takes place because what the nation-state and the party need, what the motivation behind cultural expressions in the form of architectural work (mosque, youth building, or monumental creation), and what motivates the ruling elite, is, as you rightly said, legitimacy. Thus, initial cultural perceptions underlying ultimate architectural expressions were usually built in conjunction with the accommodation of popular sentiment, or, at least, with the underlying assumption on the part of the ruling elite to express what it perceives as the cultural expression of the Islamic popular masses. Consequently, I would like to express the following: despite the domination of the nation-state-party taste of expression, and because of reasons of legitimacy, the expression of the masses is approximated since the nation-state-party represents the sentiment of the masses.

I agree with and fully endorse the observation that the association between the rich patron and the indigenous Islamic cultural expression adopts the use of different cultural references, particularly in relation to their needs and specific goals. Monuments are built not only as architectural works but also as expressions of faith. The challenge to professional architects is to catch the delicate intricacy in interpreting this complex cultural expression, by taking note of rational and intellectual levels, as well as the emotional and not always rational considerations underlying the expression of the masses.

I would disagree with the notion that the building of a theory of religion in the perspective of a philosophy of religion is still unthinkable to conservative Muslims. My close observation of Indonesian conservative scholars indicates that they are more than ready to discuss the very issue of modernity, although generally they are more inclined to use references from the great Islamic thinkers of the first six centuries. On the other hand, my proposition is that it is a challenge posed to scholars, to scientists and architects alike, to painstakingly try to appreciate first how conservative Muslims are not only accustomed to adhering to the classical books, but are also in the course of developing a new venue of *ijtihad*, and, as

such, try to understand how these conservative Muslims respond to the need of modernity, the need of progress.

In fact, I also note the prevalence of constant challenges posed to these conservative Islamic scholars, the *ulamas*, who have to respond to the need of change while maintaining harmony with the scriptures, the Quran and the Hadith, while maintaining harmony with the traditional teachings by way of the so-called contextualization of interpretations, and actualization of the interpretations of these teachings. I note also the awareness among the *ulamas* of the need and the inevitability of progress. Probably what is happening at the moment is our failure as intellectuals to establish a proper communication in terms of what we mean and what they mean by progress. Although Professor Arkoun has mentioned progress in the intellectual context, the *ulamas* probably also have connotations of progress in the spiritual context.

I would not deny the emergence of a mixture of spiritual experience and ideological elaboration produced and used by social agents, the elite — and I also subscribe to the notion and claim of the universality of Islam. Islam does not speak of nationhood, Islam does not speak of statehood and much less of ideology, but Islam speaks of mankind. Along the two forces of basic values, the universal values of Islam and the value of praxis — which have been tried by those nation-state ideologies based on the specific circumstances faced by a Muslim society in a particular country or a particular culture — Islam poses the imperative of contextuality. So I think the nation-state ideology Professor Arkoun was discussing as a dominant force that dictates the expression of contemporary Islam is a praxis to specific circumstances against which Islam was trying to pose and to respond to the imperative of contextuality.

The prevalence of cultural and local traditional influence on religious expression has been theologically accepted in Islam. As such, the issue you mention of the traditionally motivated concept of privacy in the Arab world — or for that matter of *hijab* (the Muslim scarf) — is more an issue within a local or Mediterranean context than an Islamic one. How does one deal with this diversity? *Ulamas* tend to resort to legal maxims, not legal scripts — the *usul al-fiqh* — whereby, using the system of Islamic legal rationality, they are always capable of finding answers to emerging problems, contemporary ones included.

A word of clarification is in order, particularly in facing the confusion among Western scholars, in trying to establish the notion that Islam is a foundation of a moral reference for its followers in response to problems of their relation to the Supreme Being, in relation to earthly life, as well as in relation to state affairs. I was referring to the point raised by Professor Arkoun regarding the belief that Islam is all *dawla* (all state), but also included in Islam is the terrestrial and the Supreme Being. What we need to clarify is the form of a moral code of conduct in response to the emerging realities,

which may be put in confrontation with Islamic society as a whole whether in the domain of state affairs, taking the place of the relation between human beings and the Supreme Being and in relation to earthly life.

My primary concern is that the focus of attention among observers of Islamic expression tends to be misdirected and biased towards the ruling classes' perception of Islam as the elite strata of society. When you talk about a mosque, you talk about a big mosque, a huge building, a huge construction. This sometimes misses the Islamic value; as a matter of fact, if we look at some well-known mosques in Istanbul, for instance, we notice that the very premise of Islam, that all men are created equal and the only thing that differentiates people is their *taqwa*, is not respected. In the older mosques of Istanbul there is a special place for kings and dignitaries which is different from the space allocated to other followers. This is what I mean by the failure of architects in catching the real, the true, spirit of Islam. How can we draw the attention of architects and planners to transpire the "popular" and "common Muslim" expression of Islam and make their creations not only connote but also communicate truly with the Islamic community?

I can understand, unlike Professor Arkoun, why a community destroyed a beautiful mosque, which was formerly a church, and built a new, if very distasteful, building instead. Because, however beautiful it was, it did not communicate with the spirit; it did not reflect the slightest reference to the perception of Muslims in that community.

Finally, to take up the international tragedy, I think it is worthwhile to find out what is the general sentiment among Muslim intellectuals to the recent developments in the Middle East, particularly in relation to the Iraq-Kuwait problem. There is a great deal of ambivalence but also empathy for our Muslim brothers living in the Middle East. On the one hand, God has given them the privilege of being in the birth-place of Islam and of the Prophet Muhammad who brought the most modern religious teachings, the teachings of moral conduct, yet have been deprived of the benefit of progress in the social, cultural, political, and economic spheres for many years, for many different reasons. Thus, any effort to get out of the vicious circle of social, economic, and cultural backwardness inflicted by their leaders, draws empathy and sympathy from us, the young Muslim intellectuals in Indonesia. However, as members of a civilized humanity, we would like to see that our brothers eventually find ways and means to overcome their challenges without disregard to universal values of conduct, the universal values of Islam, which teach us the values of peace and harmony.

## Discussion

### Darrundono

I have one question for Professor Arkoun: can we create contemporary expressions of Islam without understanding the Quran and the Hadith?

I would like to share with you my own experience: two or three weeks ago I was asked by a journalist for my opinion as an architect about housing for Muslims. I was shocked because I realized how little I knew about the spirit of Islam in terms of how to design a house. If I remember correctly, to Westerners “my house is my fortress” but to Muslims “my house is my heaven”. And according to the Holy Quran, if I am not mistaken, heaven is described as a place where clear and clean water runs and where trees bear fruit. My interpretation, therefore, would be that a Muslim house must have good sanitation and water supply, with trees and gardens so there will be enough oxygen for the inhabitants.

I think as Mr. Soetjipto mentioned, Islam is the most modern religion. So if we abide by the Quran and the Hadith, I think we will automatically produce contemporary or modern expressions of Islam.

In another experience three or four years ago, I was asked to build apartments for the poor. Debate between the policy-makers and myself was vigorous because they wanted to have communal baths and I insisted that it was not the Muslim way. I kept saying and I keep saying that the Muslim way is to have the room or the dwelling close to the bathroom because at least five times a day we have to do ablutions before prayer. So what I have been saying, as Professor Arkoun said, is a way of *ijtihad*.

A last example concerns city planning. Many cities exhibit designs that show no reflection of the Islamic spirit. Exclusive residential areas, for instance, are against the Islamic spirit. A Hadith says: “Your faith is not perfect if you sleep with a full stomach while your neighbours keep awake with empty stomachs.”

I would think then that if we cannot find a code or ways to design good buildings, it is not the Quran and Hadith which are not complete, but, rather, we are limited in our ability of interpreting them properly and extracting what we need. I think the Quran is not only our source for codes but, more importantly, it is a manual of life and a reference for life.

### Mohammed Arkoun

I prefer to answer these questions immediately, as I consider what has been said as very important. First, I would like to thank my friend Soetjipto Wirosardjono, who has read my paper so carefully. I was very anxious to hear a reaction from an Indonesian brother here because, as you said and you are absolutely right, I come from the Arab world. I belong to a society with links through the Arabic language and through the Mediterranean Sea. However, the fact



that we speak from this Arabic sphere does not mean (at least for me) that we consider a country like Indonesia on the periphery. On the contrary, I have immediately been impressed by the fact that I could see in Jakarta the Istiqlal Mosque facing the Roman Catholic Cathedral and realized that this society must be absolutely free and tolerant. Indonesians should come to Arab countries and teach them Islam as they had been taught Islam in the Middle Ages. With all sincerity and devotion to a modern Islam, I feel that we must learn from you.

All contemporary Muslim societies — regardless of their language, culture, geographical location, and societies — as long as they claim to belong to Islam, should know what has happened historically during the formative and productive period of Islam, during the classical period of the seventh to the twelfth centuries. We are all equally dependent on this period. There is no Asia, no Arab world, no birth-place, no privilege; there are the same difficulties for all of us, as far as we claim to be Muslims, as far as we want to be Muslims. It is historically difficult to know what happened during this “classical Islam” when the great thinkers and commentators of the Quran and all those people who collected the Hadith lived.

My contention is that we are equal in facing this question, equally ignorant — Arabs, as well as Indonesians, Pakistanis, wherever we are. This creates some tasks for all of us because if we want to discuss Islam and claim to produce a modern Islam, we have to know what classical Islam is about. Are we going to rely on Abu Hanifah, on Ibn Hanbal, on Al-Shafi'i, on Ja'far Sadeq, on all other founders of our schools of law and theology, or are we going to produce an Islam harmonious with modern thinking and modern culture. If we are going to produce a modern Islam, we must know what intellectual modernity is. Here again we are absolutely equal, although your background in Indonesia gives you the privilege to be tolerant today, to have a pluralist, tolerant society. You have a Minister of Religion who oversees all religions. This is wonderful. I wish we had that in Egypt, in Algeria, in Iraq, in all Arab countries. And if my paper emphasized a negative role of the Minister of Religion in Arab countries, I am happy to know that you have a Minister of Religion who provides for freedom for all Indonesians to be what they want to be. This is a privilege. I say this with a convinced, strong voice.

On another question, I never said that the Quran and the Hadith were irrelevant to modern times. What I said was that the Quran is what we call a religious discourse, that is, a linguistic concept which requires a linguistic analysis. We need a new rhetoric, we need a new syntax, we need new semantics, we need a new theory of metaphors which is central to all languages. We need to know what is happening with linguistics as it is studied today by specialists. We must go back to the Quran and raise new problems which have not been seen by medieval commentators because they used

Aristotelian rhetoric, the Aristotelian definition of metaphor. They used tools in linguistics which are no longer relevant to our dealing with linguistics today. And we have to know that if we are going to refer to the Quran, it is necessary from the *mujtahid* to fulfil intellectual and scientific conditions. Not everyone can read the Quran and interpret it. There were conditions defined by the *ulamas* in the classical period and, similarly, today there must be conditions. When we come to speak about the Quran and to use the Quran as our reference of authority, then democracy has to be used intelligently, as our way of using the Quran in this new context is not yet mastered.

When I mentioned the church in Algeria (your understanding was different), my point was the same one I wanted to make about Jerusalem and how people relate to spiritual values: how spiritual values are not perceived as such in the political context imposed on us by the ongoing struggle in our societies. I would agree with you on aesthetics, in that the spiritual perception of values cannot be differentiated from the aesthetic perception of values. All artistic activities, all art and creativity which we call aesthetic, are definitely spiritual because they are addressed to the spirit of man. As they nourish the spiritual vocation of human beings, so aesthetic is spiritual and spiritual is aesthetic. We use two words to name a force in us: a force which we express through art, through intellectual endeavour, which is different from all our ideological production in the society. This is a very important distinction as we are confusing ideological statements all the time. This confusion is deadly.

### **Meer Mobashsher Ali**

This seminar is being held at a very opportune moment. When the Muslim world is divided into two distinct groups pointing guns at each other, we are at least trying to find out where all the forces unite and form a unified common theme: Islamic architecture.

The objective of the seminar, as stated, “is not to be a theological inquiry or a predominantly philosophical one into the ‘authentic’ spiritual doctrines of Islam, the revealed religion and how such doctrines should or could be manifested in the built environment of Muslims”. I would like to bring in a new concept, the spirit of Islam. There cannot be any Islamic architecture without the spirit of Islam. We know how cosmology and myth have influenced the built form of non-Muslim societies. Myths are practically nonexistent in Islam.

Today we are to some extent uncomfortable with some of the doctrines and apt to sweep them under the carpet —doctrines regarding segregation of men and women, marriage, food and drink, etc. Some influence our way of life and our culture quite deeply and the way of life is a strong determinant of the built environment.

We have been discussing Islamic architecture in different forms partly due to our quest for identity and partly due to our aversion to modernity. Modern societies are being swept away by Western influence and materialistic objectives. Established order and value systems are vanishing without being replaced by new orders and value systems. The built forms generated out of this tension and instability are transitory. An art movement becomes popular for a short while and then perishes after a few years. These movements are gimmicks not based on profound ideas. Societies have become tired of this recurrent bizarre caricature of built forms; societies are now striving to find a more stable order based on profound ideas which the spirit of Islam can provide.

Discussions on Islamic architecture mainly hover around symbolism or easily identifiable motifs or at best have been successful in identifying vernacular architecture and superior craftsmanship. Symbolism, indigenous form, and superior craftsmanship do not totally form the basis of Islamic architecture. It is the spirit of Islam and the philosophy of Islam that can provide the basis around which built forms might be generated. A society that practises Islam will automatically produce Islamic architecture. This can be enriched by new materials, techniques, and tools, depending on location and time.

Does Islam advocate high art? Does Islam advocate functionalism? Can the sumptuous buildings of degenerated Muslim monarchs truly be called Islamic Architecture? These are valid questions that do not have valid answers. Islamic architecture cannot be based on revival nor can it be a modern interpretation of old expressions. The civilization must move forward with new innovation and creativity. The source of inspiration for this forward movement should be the spirit of Islam. This inspiration need not be motivated by the big buildings of the West, Western mechanization, Western attitude to life, and Western goals and objectives.

Islam encourages designing with nature. The moment we consider artificially controlled environments, the concept of naturally ventilated interior space is gone. Similarly, an abundance of artificial light reduces the charm of ambient light in interior spaces. Islam stresses singularity. Does it mean that a single-focus composition is more acceptable than confusion and contradiction? Mondrian's composition is absolute abstraction and devoid of any redundant elements. It seems to agree with Islamic principles. The word *zannat*, the utopian concept of excellence in living conditions, also means "concealed". Can it be concluded that where a glass box is not at all acceptable a concrete box is?

Every year my students are asked to design a mosque. The design they often come up with is a pure geometric form, say a cube. The walls are vast surfaces of concrete or brick with no or minimal openings. The mass is often given a floating effect, being reflected in a pool of water; the floor is raised and approached by grand

stairs; light is taken in by the roof usually highlighting the interior wall surfaces. Usually the prayer space is punctuated by columns and is accentuated by the *mihrab*. The mosque always has a high minaret in a precise straight line. Such mosques do not get built. Mostly mosques with conventional elements get built; or grandiose designs with high columns and large free spaces and domes or shell roofs draw the attention of the elite.

In Bangladesh, decision-makers love “Islamicized” buildings with an abundance of added-on Islamic motifs. Some architects use different variations of this technique for commercial success. There is a growing resistance amongst young architects against imposed or superficial beautification, but all of them have developed a passion for “regionalism”. A search for true “regional” architecture is taking place as is a new awareness regarding conservation and rehabilitation of old buildings, especially those with Islamic architectural significance.

It can be very easily felt that Western movements like postmodernism, contextualism, and the present deconstructionism have failed to win the favour of the majority of the Muslim population. This indifference is due to the aversion towards Western models and the way of life of Western societies. Hence the search for contemporary expressions of Islam in buildings. Or it might be the influence of historicism. I think the issues have not yet been resolved. For real expressions of Islam in buildings, more investigations are necessary, not only into the history of old buildings, but into the religion and its followers, into their way of life, their goals and objectives, their faith, and a true spirit of Islam.

### **Dogan Kuban**

Ignoring historical facts and referring only to an idealized Islam is a misguided practice which may hinder Muslim societies from becoming equal partners in the coming century. This is the case in culture, in technology, as well as in art and architecture. To try to interpret and understand everything by religious precepts is wrong and historically false. One can read the entire Quran and repeat all the Hadith literature, but this would not help to build a decent house and a beautiful mosque. Actually the ugliest mosques are being built by those who constantly refer to the sayings of the Prophet. All the mosques, office buildings, banks, palaces, hotels, tourist resorts are at odds with the Prophet’s *sunna*. He was against any unnecessary addition to his house. He was against any kind of luxury.

Mr. Soetjipto Wirosardjono speaks of the special feeling one gets in mosques and argues that without it one cannot have a really good design of a mosque. I would like to remind him that early mosque design in Muslim history shows the utmost pragmatism. The practice was to convert churches and *apadanas* into mosques. Those Muslim fighters for faith were no less spiritual than today’s zealots.

This simple fact convincingly proves that the form of the prayer place, and even the attached alien symbolism to it, were no hindrance to the performance of prayer. Today's populism cannot accept such tolerance. Consequently it is outside of the original spirit of Islam and it is uncreative.

Although contemporary politics in Muslim societies strongly influence architecture, the politico-religious discourse is totally alien to true architectural discourse. Saying that Allah is the only creator and the architect is only an innovator is a transfer of a religious concept to material life, to architecture. This is meaningless.

### **Mohammed Arkoun**

There is a definite possibility to develop social sciences regarding the Quran and the Hadith, and that is what I am calling for all the time. Many Muslim scholars are doing this and there is no way to avoid such work. I am not surprised that such a question can be raised. What is true is that when we apply these sciences to study the Quran and the Hadith especially, a lot of objections today come from Muslims, who say, "These are Western sciences; we cannot rely on them; they have nothing to do with Islam", and they reject them. But this is ideological fighting and we have to face it and to go through it; it is our history. We have to fight not with violence. We have to fight with *ijtihad* not with *jihad*.

### **Martin Frishman**

I would like to propose three "please don'ts". The first is psychological, the second philosophical, and the third architectural.

1. Observing world political developments over the last thirty years or so has led me to the sad conclusion that a people repressed and discriminated against may, once given power, produce at least in part, in their behaviour pattern, a mirror image of the actions of those who had previously suppressed them.

Those of you who take the words Westernization, modernization, and secularization, put them in a box and label it "anti-Islam" are, I would suggest, no better than those who not so long ago took words like camel, carpet, bazaar, and harem and popped them in a box they then labelled "Arab". Please do not replace colonialist racism with either paranoia or worse still, reverse racism, because if you do, you will have slammed the door on that dialogue on which progress depends.

2. After His Highness' lucid and moving reference in his opening address in Jakarta to the staggering problem of poverty in the Islamic world, it was disappointing in the course of yesterday's discussion on the role of the mosque to hear one platitude after another about the desirability of the mosque fulfilling social roles in addition to being solely a place for worship. We know the Suleymaniye complex

used to serve thousands of bowls of soup to the needy every day, but what, did anyone suggest, might be useful and sensible in our day? No one ventured past the platitudes.

We do know two things about the poor of Third World countries in our time. The first is that a great majority, though by no means all, will soon find themselves in an industrialized world. With industrialization comes democratization, even if it fails to come about in any other way, and with democratization, education, and to some degree, perhaps, secularization. The other thing we know is that as architects and planners, it will be up to us to help them create an environment which will help combat their almost inevitable sense of alienation by augmenting their feeling for their own identity. If establishing new foundations to fund charitable complexes around the mosques is a thing of the past, then this is a task for the immediate future.

3. Please try not to fall into the hole Prince Charles fell into. Taking a painting by Canaletto of London's skyline with its myriad of church spires, seen from the Thames, and comparing it to today's silhouette of high-rise office blocks, is as useful as comparing the skyline of Istanbul with the outline of a petrodollar Gulf state city. Queen Elizabeth the First's England is as dead as Suleyman the Magnificent's Ottoman empire, but the society in which we live, which has produced and goes on producing millions of buildings of monumental dullness, is very much alive. Emperors and financiers choose what they want to build, but it remains our responsibility as architects to transform what they consider as profitably beautiful into a human environment, to achieve which we need not only talent but a proper analysis and understanding of the problems of our time. Understanding and honouring history will help us in this task, as worshipping history never will.

### **Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim**

Professor Arkoun said something astonishing and rather shocking but perhaps it is needed. What he said in essence is that if we rely on Islamic scholarship as it developed historically, then we had better know that it is relevant. He states that all intellectual expressions of Islam as a religion took place between the seventh and the twelfth centuries, and that was the framework of knowledge established then; this was changed in the context of the shift that took place in the sixteenth century and then became established in the eighteenth century. I believe this statement ought to be qualified, as I do not think we can just accept the statement that all Islamic scholarship stopped in the twelfth century. How would you account, for instance, for the incredible development of architecture in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries? Well, if you suggest that there was no scholarship during that time, I would argue, even if I am not a historian, that there must have been a huge scholarship behind that architecture.

There is a lot of research going on now to identify the sort of intellectual or theoretical background to this work, as it is inconceivable that such work was done without such a framework. I agree completely that there has been a shift in the field of knowledge and that brings me to the second point.

Professor Arkoun said that intellectual modality is what we ought to relate to. The important point is that Professor Arkoun is trying to relate to us a notion of sacredness, which needs a lot of discussion, a lot of debate. In the context of architectural creation, what he is proposing to us to think of as a “sacredness” is what we designers talk about in terms of the importance of that quality in the space and attempting to deal with it and to articulate it in the space.

The last question is: is it conceivable that intellectuals of the Islamic societies, or intellectuals in our world, can bypass the eighteenth century modern paradigm in their effort to produce what is needed intellectually for work today? Can they actually do that jump? It is a very theoretical question, but I think it is a very important one because if you say that it is an inevitability that we have to go through what Europe has if we want to build up our base of intellect, then it is a disastrous situation.

#### **Mohammed Arkoun**

I would like to have time to answer in detail all the questions asked by Dr. Abdelhalim. He has raised the question of moving through all what has happened in the eighteenth century. This is not what I mean. We have to know the historical process through which, in Western thought, we have come to consider the sacred as it is, and we have to learn from history how all things came to be as they are now. We have to jump in history to as it is now. It is a fundamental question and relates to what I said about Jerusalem, being such a rich place for studying the changing outlook we have to the sacred.

#### **Michael Sumarijanto**

The recommendation of Professor Arkoun to go into a “religious discourse” in an Aristotelian fashion can fall into difficulties of correct interpretations. My question is how do we draw the line when interpreting images between symbols and clichés and all the “isms”?

After listening to the problems of trying to find the identity of Islamic architecture and the kind of acceptance that we have in Indonesia regarding mosque architecture and expressions of tolerance, I feel that there is a possibility of promoting what has been commonly found in Indonesia and written in the Indonesian language (such as in several doctoral dissertations related to Islam) and translating it into English, possibly under the sponsorship of this Award.

**Ismail Serageldin**

I do believe there are a number of things that have been raised that deserve some thought. Martin Frishman's comments about Ali Shuaibi's comment yesterday on innovation and creativity pose the problems of intercultural discourse. I think that anyone with a profound understanding of Arab culture will understand what Ali Shuaibi was trying to refer to, and it relates to what Dr. Abdelhalim was talking about earlier when referring to the sacred and the profane and the notion of creation per se as opposed to the ability to innovate and to give to society some new form. In Western architectural criticism that distinction is not present, but in some Arabic writings relating to architectural criticism it is frequently made. Here Mohammed Arkoun's invitation for using the intellectual tools of today to reconstruct many of the methodologies that we are using and to open up ourselves to this analysis would be very beneficial.



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**Women and Space in Muslim Societies**

*Afaf Mahfouz and Ismail Serageldin*

**Comments**

*Hayat Salam*

**Discussion**

*Jale Erzen, Martin Frishman, Inajati Adrisijanti, Selma al-Radi, Hayat Salam, Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim, Ismail Serageldin, Salma Samar Damluji, Afaf Mahfouz, Syed Zaigham Shafiq Jaffery*

# Women and Space in Muslim Societies

*Afaf Mahfouz and Ismail Serageldin*

## 1. Clarifying the Issues

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture has included and integrated skilful women in the field of art and architecture since its inception in 1977. Yet, this is the first time that a formal session has been reserved to reflect on women's place, role, and contributions to the built environment in Muslim societies. This seminar, on *Contemporary Expressions of Islam in Buildings*, seems to be the right place to start this kind of reflection and to follow the tradition of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture of learning from the past, reassessing the present, and suggesting alternatives for a better tomorrow, for a better world.

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture seminars have addressed at length the importance of the role of architects in development. Mohammed Arkoun suggested in the fourth Aga Khan Award for Architecture seminar that the architect acts as a mediator between philosophical ideas and their physical projection in construction. Therefore it is appropriate to consider briefly ways in which contemporary expressions of Islam in buildings may reflect the role and status of Muslim women. Their role and status, like everything else, has evolved over time. This evolution, with its ups and downs, has not always been for the better, and has had much more to do with changing social, economic, and political conditions than with intrinsically religious or theological issues.<sup>1</sup>

Remembering these realities might help us at the outset of this deliberation. To do that, it is constructive to consider two sets of separate issues: gender inequality present in all cultures to varying degrees and in various manifestations; and the specific condition of women in Muslim societies today.

Whether in Germany or Egypt, Poland or Iran, the United States or India, illustrations of gender inequality are found in legal and socio-economic rights, in perception and language, as well as in visibility or power. They are also manifested through social and economic indicators evident in practically every society.<sup>2</sup>

In less-developed countries and in less-developed areas in general, gender inequality is closely allied with poverty,<sup>3</sup> a vulnerability to economic hardship,<sup>4</sup> and/or a lack of education. To the extent that women are also the custodians of the young, this gender inequality translates into very high levels of child malnutrition, morbidity, and mortality.<sup>5</sup> It is therefore important to underline that many of the statements on gender inequality that follow are broadly applicable to most countries of the Third World without regard to their being predominantly Muslim or otherwise.

## General Observations

In most less-developed countries today, women, who account for 50 percent of the population and, in many sectors, 60 percent of the labour force, are frequently the prime producers of food (in



*Grameen Bank Housing, Bangladesh (top and above). This institution, reaching the poorest of the poor with small loans averaging \$50-70 per person, focuses primarily on women, who account for over 86 percent of borrowers. Women are proving to be the true vector of social change in these very poor communities. Grameen not only empowers them with credit, but it gives them a sense of dignity. Architect: Hassan Ashraful Photographs: H. Anwar/AKAA*

many countries rural males produce cash crops while rural females produce food crops). Yet they earn as little as 10 percent of the salary income and own as little as 1 percent of the assets.<sup>6</sup> There are significantly lower levels of access to educational facilities and a tremendous disparity in risk factors. For example, women in some developing countries are 150 times more likely to die in childbirth than women in the United States. Furthermore, in perilous conditions such as drought and famine, women figure predominantly in the vulnerable groups, along with their attendant infants.

In addition to the women's role and potential role in production, women are still the major, if not the only, caretakers of children, both boys and girls. Young women then become the most important group for both policy-makers and grassroots activists. Starting from birth if not before (in the womb) — according to recent research — children of both sexes know from their mothers directly and indirectly their place in society. Just as a relationship between heredity and physical health of human beings has been shown, more and more research provides evidence of the outcome of the relationship between the "internal" reality of the mother and her "external" reality and its influence on both daughters and sons. That is to say that for those who believe that development is "people centred", gender inequality can explain a great deal of the existing dynamics in most Third World countries whether they are predominantly Muslim or not. The prevalence of disease, the increase in poverty, pollution, and environmental degradation in the present world have helped bring attention to the direct link between development and the role and place of women as co-architects of development.

Efforts to improve the conditions of women that are in extreme poverty are therefore at the forefront of the concerns of those who must deal with the problem of poverty and socio-economic development. One of the most successful efforts for so doing has come from Bangladesh, the 1989 Aga Khan Award winner, Grameen Bank.<sup>7</sup> "What started as a housing credit scheme has turned into an overall integrated development process... The previously marginal, dispossessed poor in Bangladesh, especially women, are now socially empowered... The lesson of this success story lies in the thoughtful concept and the participatory process behind it — which could be emulated, not imitated all over the Muslim and Third Worlds" (Master Jury).<sup>8</sup> The inspiration provided by the success of the Grameen experience is no doubt encouraging many other efforts elsewhere in the Muslim world — and more broadly the whole Third World — to deal more effectively with both poverty and gender issues. Linkages between housing, credit, and the participatory process, as the Master Jury pointed out, has led ultimately to an overall development process that allowed the poor, and especially women, to become socially empowered and free to carry out their role inside and outside the house and be equal partners in the development of their community.

### On Women in Muslim Societies

When we come to issues related to Muslim countries, there are important distinctions to be made between religious doctrine and social practice. Thus religious doctrine provides the general ethical framework within which Muslim societies are expected to function.<sup>9</sup> The status of women in such cases can be argued on a variety of textual and other references in an *Usuli* framework (Muslim scholasticism) or it can be looked at in terms of present societal reality. The major concern of this paper is with the latter. Nevertheless, a brief discussion of the former is appropriate given its profound importance in the perceptions of large segments of the Muslim population and therefore its likely impact on real societal factors. In discussing religious doctrine, it is important to underline that in the historical context of early Islam, the status of women generally — and poor women specifically — significantly improved in the early period, compared to the pre-Islamic times.<sup>10</sup>

Studying the tradition for various injunctions and applications of such injunctions should therefore not be divorced from the historical context, namely, the specificities of the societies in which the injunctions were being applied. Thus Islam imposed a considerable limit on polygamy compared with what had prevailed in pre-Islamic times.<sup>11</sup> Rights of property were assured and legal rights were significantly expanded.<sup>12</sup>

What the present interpretation of doctrine in a rapidly changing world should be depends on the reading of learned scholars and jurists. Al-Shafi'i, one of the greatest jurists of all time, applied the same legislation differently in Cairo than in Baghdad. When asked why, he said that what is applicable in Cairo is not applicable in Baghdad, and what is applicable today is not applicable tomorrow.<sup>13</sup> Arguably his ruling would also differ now a thousand years after that statement and would differ if he were making rulings for a Muslim community in France or one in Indonesia. Within Egypt itself, from the rulings of al-Shafi'i in the tenth century A.D. to those of Muhammad Abduh, the Mufti in Egypt at the end of the nineteenth century, one can also see important differences. Thus Muhammad Abduh in a published opinion wrote that it was within the power of the state to limit polygamy under an Islamic rule.<sup>14</sup>

What makes that particular statement by such an eminent authority of great importance is that it was not a decision rendered under pressure from a state that wanted to move in that direction. It was a volunteered position moving against prevailing official opinion, and therefore did not constitute an *ex post facto* rationalization of a societal condition. It was the thoughtful reading of both text and precedent and the realistic understanding of a changing society by a scholar of rare insight and distinction.

Even in civic and political leadership, areas in which women are considered to be most marginalized in Muslim societies, there is evidence that there is little that is inherently Islamic in the barriers

women confront. Thus, even in the medieval period, a few women of exceptional character were able to rule Muslim states, like Sultana Radia in Delhi (1236 A.D.) and Shajarat al-Durr in Cairo (1250 A.D.). In the second half of the seventeenth century one could note four Indonesian women rulers.<sup>15</sup> And recently in Pakistan, Mrs. Benazir Bhutto became the first elected woman prime minister in a Muslim country.

More broadly, Muslim women have carried their share in national struggles, occasionally bearing arms (from documented cases in Iran at the beginning of the century to Libyan women serving in the Libyan army today), but more frequently participating in organized political activity against colonialism and occupation forces.

Thus, the historical record does not support the view that the rigid limitations imposed on the role of women in some Muslim societies are in any way norms applicable throughout Muslim civilization over time. There is indeed a body of opinion that would define the special role of women from the premise of fundamental human rights and equality inherent in the Islamic belief in the liberation of all mankind. Using a derivative approach, it would seek amendments to that body of rights and not start from an *a priori* position on the status and the role of women.<sup>16</sup>

### **Divergences and Trends**

Looking at the Muslim societies today, there is tremendous variability in social practice between the societies of Tunisia and Niger, between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, and between Pakistan and Indonesia. This variability in social practices translates into different societal roles for women and for the contextual framework within which women's views of self and societies are defined.<sup>17</sup> It is important therefore to clarify which society is being discussed.

This is not to deny that there is a common thread that defines the Muslim societies of the world, but to recognize that there are significant differences among the individual members of this collective family. Indeed, one of the unique features of the organizing principles of Islam is "unity in diversity", which is no less than the national motto of Indonesia. Even within a given Muslim country, there are significant differences among subsocieties. Nomadic, rural, and urban populations tend to be quite different in terms of social organization, role differentiation, and patterns of interaction.

This vast mosaic, complex as it is, is made even more complex by constant and rapid change. An explosion of technology, global communications, population movements, and new economic structures are transforming societies everywhere. Women's access to education and jobs is rapidly expanding. The extended family is rapidly shrinking. The very fabric of society is changing as the links and the boundaries between the spiritual and the materialistic, the sacred and the profane, the modern and the traditional, are

being redefined in myriad ways. In fact, even in Saudi Arabia, arguably the most conservative Muslim society, a distinguished Saudi female scholar, Dr. Soraya al-Turki, after detailed investigation and documentation, has concluded: "If we look at... developments as stages, we can see that patterns once viewed as religiously sinful have become not sinful nor even shameful from a social point of view but, in fact, acceptable."<sup>18</sup>

### **Changing Conditions and Roles**

These changes are accompanied by changes in the contributions women are making in Muslim societies everywhere. Indeed, and even though the role of Muslim women in reproduction or as mothers is common knowledge, their role in production has been frequently overlooked. Muslim women, more than Muslim men, followed the teaching of al-Shafi'i. Illustrations of their changing roles according to their changing conditions can be found everywhere. In Mauritania women are active in the fisheries industry. In mixed-gender institutions of such countries as Egypt, Tunisia, and Iraq, Muslim women are law professors, engineers, and nuclear physicists. Women brokers and entrepreneurs have their own activities serving other women in Saudi Arabia, and Saudi women in the West can be found at the most prestigious universities and in professional institutions, all in mixed-gender environments. Women are found at all levels in the Muslim world: in the media, in some cases in politics, and in some areas of the judiciary.

The special case of the Muslim communities living in the West needs to be studied separately because of the complexity of the place of women in what is perceived as a nonprotective environment or an unsafe place. But what can be said here in this limited space is that Muslim women living in the West are as active as their non-Muslim counterparts, whether inside or outside their homes, depending on their socio-economic class or their level of education. Nevertheless, Muslim women in the West have to deal with the challenges and problems related to their Muslim identity in the society of adoption.

## **2. The Architectural and Urbanistic Dimensions**

The role and contributions of women as articulators of space and creators of an architectural vocabulary specific to their societies are occasionally formal, but mostly informal. Although the number of women architects is rising rapidly in countries such as Turkey and Egypt,<sup>19</sup> the profession is still mainly dominated by males.<sup>20</sup> This is a worldwide phenomenon as documented in Clare Lorenz's recent book, *Women in Architecture*.<sup>21</sup> It is therefore more appropriate to look separately at women's contributions to the articulation of space when it comes from practising architects. It is the experience

accumulated through practising in the field that will give women the opportunity to assume their role as “potential mediators” and design buildings reflecting contemporary expressions of the new needs of her fellow men and women in a changing world. Muslim women architects can then, as much as men, be part of the process of development; they can be equal partners in promoting equality and human rights, in promoting the kind of creativity which will accelerate development and ultimately will help establish a real partnership between men and women as the co-architects of Muslim society.

### **The Articulation of Urban Space**

Two unique features of the articulation of urban space in Muslim societies set it apart from many other cultures. First, the concept of property in Islam is different from and more sophisticated than that in many other societies. It strikes a unique balance between the needs of society and the needs of individuals, and makes distinctions between ownership, control, and use.<sup>22</sup> Second, the regulations that govern urban building in Muslim societies leave much to the discretion of people living there, especially neighbours.<sup>23</sup> This is a reflection of the special emphasis on the relations between neighbours, which is also a profound part of much of Muslim religious thought and societal practice.

These two characteristics are particularly relevant to the role of women, for women are the “anchor” of the family unit, which is the building block of all societal interaction. In that context they have had much to say about the actual use of their property and in working out “arrangements” with neighbours that have affected the overall pattern of urban space.

Returning to religious and societal aspects for a moment, one finds that the unique position of Muslim women in Muslim culture, with its emphasis on modesty and limitations on the intermixing of the sexes, results in particular patterns of “private”, “semi-private”, and “public” spaces that are quite distinct. This was illustrated in Janet Abu-Lughod’s contrasts between the urban spaces created by some Hindu and Muslim societies, even though both societies placed a heavy emphasis on modesty and on the regulation of male-female conduct in society. She states:

Why, then, would their organizations of urban space be so different? One key lies in the different definitions of modesty. In Hindu society, a maximum segregation between the sexes and hence female modesty is directed toward insulating the wife from her husband’s male relatives and most especially from her husband’s father. Therefore it is within private space (the dwelling itself) that segregation is most needed. In Islam, maximum segregation between the sexes is required outside the kin group, i.e. vis-à-vis strangers. Private space is safe and secure.

Public space is completely unsafe and must be eschewed by females. And the “social invention” of what I have called semi-private space is an attempt to create a protected area outside the dwelling unit itself within which kin-like responsibilities (and freedom) govern.<sup>24</sup>

### The Societal Impact on Architecture

From the societal segregation of women comes specific challenges to the designers’ talents. One remarkable case worth mentioning is the original design by the late Fazlur Rahman Khan of S.O.M. for the Mecca Campus of King Abdul Aziz University.

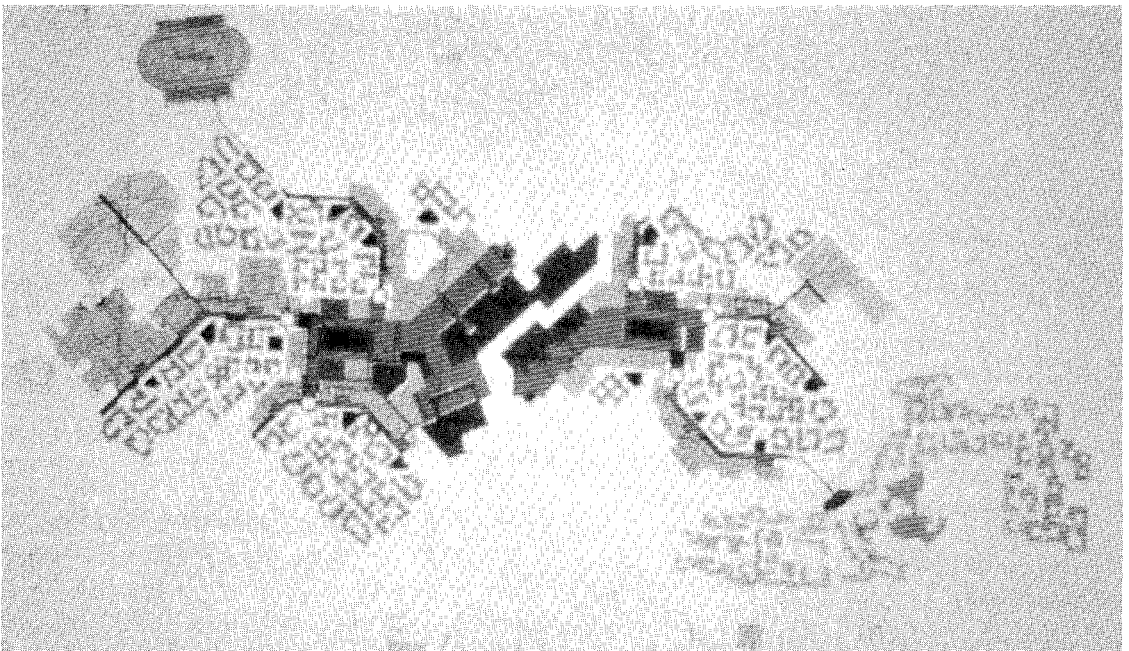
Though never built, this design has been published and very widely discussed among concerned professionals. It is hailed as one of the most sensitive designs ever done for that sort of problem. From working with the site, to attention to climate, to social features, nothing was left unstudied. One feature concerns us here. Respecting current societal preferences, the programme called for two separate campuses, one for men and the other for women. The design provides this complete segregation, with completely separate entrances. But conditions and attitudes change. What if the entire complex (both campuses) were to be turned over to one of the two sexes, or what if one day it were to become a co-educational facility? The design, by abutting the administrative complexes and the libraries of both campuses, facilitates the eventual linking of the two campuses.

A different approach was used in Sultan Qaboos University in the Sultanate of Oman. There, separate residential facilities for men

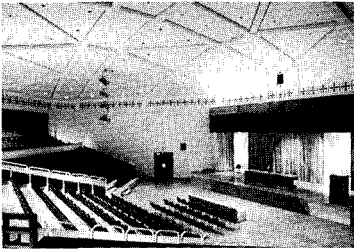
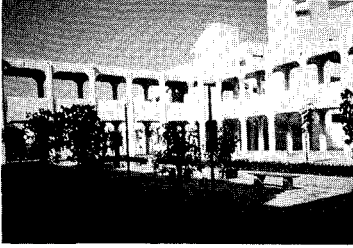
*The original design of King Abdul Aziz University’s Mecca Campus in Mecca, Saudi Arabia (the subsequent Um al-Qura University), designed by the late Fazlur Rahman Khan of S.O.M. showed great sensitivity to site and locale and to the need to segregate the women’s campus from the men’s. But the architect’s design allowed for integrating the two campuses into a single one at some future date around a core administrative and library building complex.*

*Architect: the late Fazlur Rahman Khan of S.O.M.*

*Photograph: Courtesy of S.O.M.*







*The Sultan Qaboos University in Oman segregates residential facilities (top) but allows common teaching areas (above).  
Architect: YRM International  
Photograph: Courtesy of the architect*

and women were connected by independent corridors and staircases to common classrooms, where students attend in patterns of seating that allow separation of sexes.

Yet the societal segregation of women in Muslim societies is not absolute. Women, as potential objects of desire, are to be shielded from the gaze of strange men. Women are permitted to see the men in question, provided they are not seen themselves. This particular definition of privacy has produced the quintessentially Middle Eastern device of the *musharabiyya*. Popularly regarded as a symbol of segregation and exclusion of women from public life, the *musharabiyya* permits women at the same time to see but not to be seen.

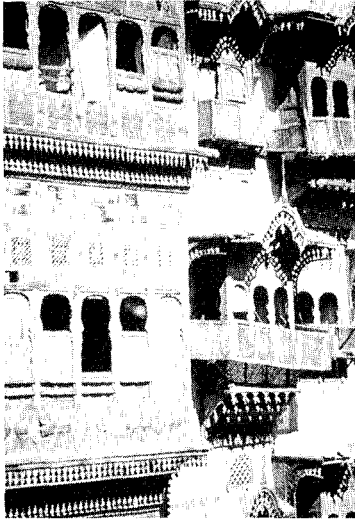
In different ways this same logic is found in the articulation of religious and secular space. In religious space, women's prayer places in congregational mosques are not just separated from the men, but are put behind, or in a mezzanine, or to the side, where they are not visible, but where they can still see the male worshippers and the imam.

Traditional dress also hides women's features, but not men's. Even though many Muslim societies do not adopt the veil for women, most still demand that their body be well clad. Not only are men's facial features always visible, but in many societies nudity of the male torso is fully acceptable. One can make a case based on the history and evolution of traditional dress of Muslim women to underline the fact that the veil symbolized different economic, social, and political statements since the early days of Islam.

Residential architecture is the area in which women are assumed to have the most influence. Certainly interior decoration is conceded to be a domain where women's contributions have had a marked and decisive effect. In many Muslim countries, the decorative and the architectonic are interwoven into an inseparable whole. Village residential architecture in North Africa, for example, complements simple exteriors with elaborate interior decoration (e.g., Ghadames, Libya, documented by Intisar Azouz).

Traditional values also have an impact upon the articulation of residential space. Despite the immense architectural differences between the Malay house and the North African house, they still share in common the notion of a large central room or space (e.g., courtyard) that articulates the distribution of other rooms or spaces, with a private area to which the women can repair. The differences arise mostly in the relative strength of the segregating partitioning, and the presence or absence of the semi-private space within the house.

Yet these societal practices are changing. Reduction of the extended family concept to the adoption of the nuclear family, women's increasing participation in formal employment, and the decline of fertility, along with rising congestion and land values in cities, are all increasingly changing the pattern of residences towards more



*The musharabiyya, that quintessentially Middle Eastern device, symbolizes the unique place of women in Arab Muslim society. It provides protection whereby women may see but cannot be seen.*  
Photograph: AKAA Archives

apartments. These, in turn, are increasingly laid out in more conventional Western fashion.

The direct link between the changing roles of women and families on the one hand, and of residential architecture on the other, is also demonstrated by the case of the Minangkabau who traditionally were a matriarchal society. Enormous houses sheltering an entire clan are disappearing as many younger women are attracted to a different lifestyle and leaving the village.<sup>25</sup>

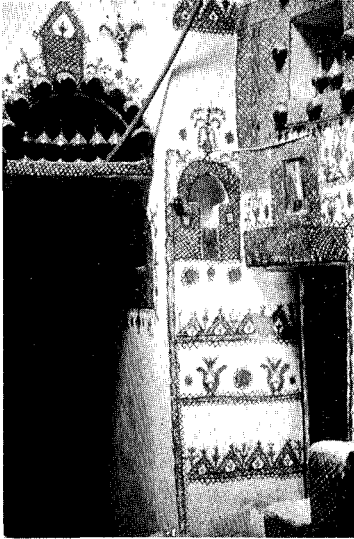
But, in the rapidly changing societies of the Muslim world, women's roles, although changing, still revolve around a core of feminine functions as daughter, wife, and mother. Their participation in religious as opposed to spiritual life is still governed by societal rituals of birth, marriage, death, and mourning. Indeed, some social scientists have argued that rituals such as weddings and funerals provide unique insights into a society. Some fascinating studies have been undertaken along these lines.<sup>26</sup> Such rituals "in all societies are rich in symbolism and the signs through which one can understand the broader aspects of that society".<sup>27</sup>

### **Women as Practitioners**

The societal role of Muslim women varies tremendously from country to country. Some countries have questioned the appropriateness of women taking on professional careers outside the home. This view, however, has ceased to carry weight in most Muslim societies, and women are found making their contributions to practically all the professions.<sup>28</sup> Women professionals have tended to be confronted by a wide range of covert and overt barriers, in Muslim as well as in non-Muslim societies.<sup>29</sup>

Women architects have fared no differently from women in other professions. Their outstanding output,<sup>30</sup> from the early pioneers to the many thousands of practising architects today, provides testimony to their abilities. Most would choose to be judged as architects, not as women architects.<sup>31</sup> Their work, however, deserves special recognition because they have had to overcome many societal hurdles to participate fully in the profession.<sup>32</sup> Without question, they have demonstrated ability to perform as effectively as their male peers and to bring to bear their sensibility and talent on a wide range of problems, achieving outstanding results. Among the achievements worthy of mention here is Malene Bjorn's Kuwait Water Towers, winner of the 1980 Aga Khan Award for Architecture.<sup>33</sup> No less interesting is the work of many notable Muslim women practitioners.

Yasmeen Lari of Pakistan has not only been president of the Pakistani Architects Association, but has also built sensitive housing schemes for the poor, such as the Anguri Bagh Housing Project. Rawia Fadel, who launched the first architecture programme for women in Saudi Arabia,<sup>34</sup> is now the key architect in Egypt's government school-building programme. Zaha Hadid, of Iraq, is



*Elaborate internal decoration combines with the architectonic features to produce the unique environment of this home in Ghadames, Libya. Women have a major role as the “anchors” of the family unit in the internal residential space.*  
Photograph: I. Azouz

at the forefront of current world thinking in architecture with her award-winning deconstructivist work for The Peak in Hong Kong.<sup>35</sup>

Fawizah Kamal is struggling with the definition of an authentic regionalism in Malaysia, and her project for an Islamic centre deserves special mention given the theme of this conference. The Balai Islam, linked to the campus in Penang, Malaysia, is to be a centre of teaching, learning, and spiritual development. It was designed<sup>36</sup> inter alia to:

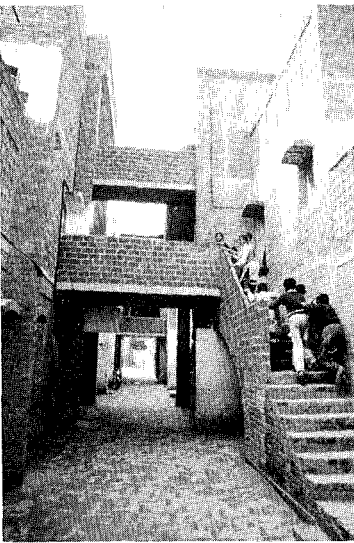
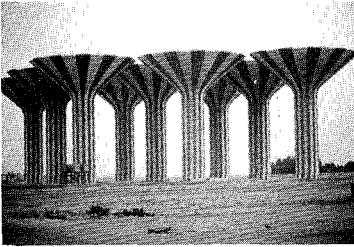
- Provide a training centre and spiritual guidance centre for students who will become future leaders of the country;
- Encourage the campus society, including non-Muslims, to be aware of the principles and activities of Islam;
- Provide a meeting-place for congregational prayers, religious teaching, and seminars;
- Be a motivating factor and a symbol of Islamic activities in the region;
- Act as a centre for books, pamphlets, and documents relating to Islamic studies.

The main block of the complex consists of a prayer hall which can accommodate 1,200 men and 800 women (males on the ground floor and females on the mezzanine floor), an ablution area, and shoe storage facilities. Total area of the ground floor is 18,000 square feet (1672.2 square metres). There are also six other blocks of 1,200 square feet (111.48 square metres) each. One has a small prayer hall and ablution area for the deceased (*tempat sembahyang mayat*). Another consists of a food preparation area, rest room/lounge, and imam's room. The other blocks include seminar rooms and the library.

### 3. For a Gender-Sensitive Architectural Criticism

Lack of attention to the needs of any particular group is usually made easier by the invisibility of the presumed requirements of that group. Thus, until the architectural profession took to heart the needs of the handicapped, which they have done in recent years, there was nothing wrong in the eyes of most designers or critics in designing public buildings without ramps for wheelchairs or with doorways too small to let them pass through, or to have elevators without braille buttons or sound signals for indicating the movement between floors. That this was an architecture that created and organized spaces that would inherently limit the accessibility of a public building for some members of the public was not sufficiently appreciated. In fact, against that criterion some of the great buildings of this century (such as the Barcelona Pavilion of 1927) would be found lacking.

Similarly, the special needs of women and the unique contributions they bring to any society, a fortiori a Muslim society, are not sufficiently appreciated to provoke a more gender-sensitive



*Water Towers (top), Kuwait, 1980 Aga Khan Award for Architecture winner, were designed by Malene Bjørn of Denmark. The design showed that a necessary facility could be a major architectural element in the cityscape. Indeed, so successful was the design that the towers have become the symbol of Kuwait. Yasmeen Lari's Anguri Bagh Housing Project (above) for the poor of Pakistan shows sensitivity to scale and materials. Photographs: M. al-Hariri/AKAA; J. Bétant/AKAA*

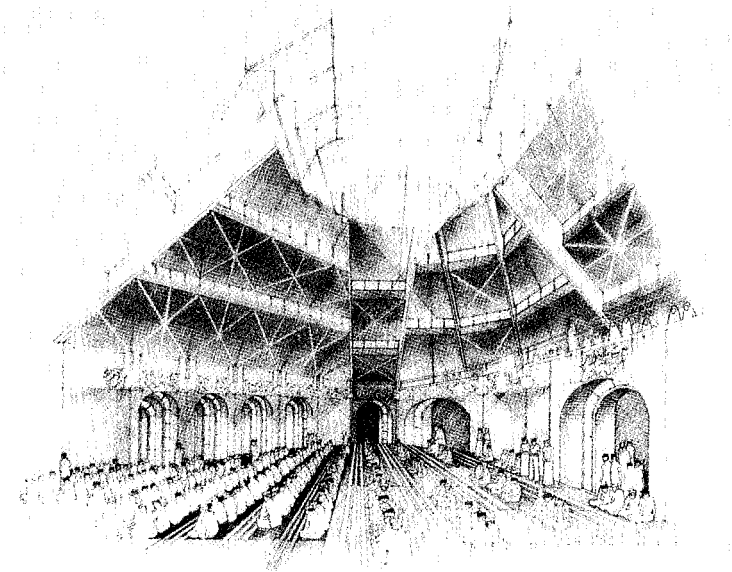
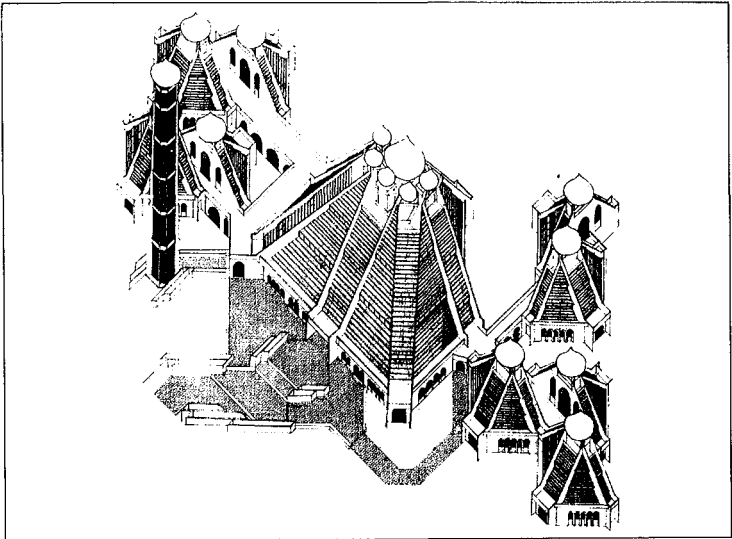
architectural criticism. The preceding discussion has shown how women's special contributions are reflected in endless ways in today's rich canvas of Muslim societies in transition. The unique dilemma of the search for cultural identity in Muslim societies, one that *risks* being stifled and trampled by an overpowering and insensitive Western mass-consumption culture, finds an echo in microcosm in the dilemma of the contemporary Muslim woman trying to define her role and contribution in a Muslim society that frequently tries to suppress her contribution as a means of asserting its own individuality, its otherness from the dominant West. This oppressive stasis is neither inherently Islamic nor is it necessarily the sole or correct reading of the tradition of the past. Much less will it be the correct path for the future of truly Muslim societies.

This is not an appeal for Muslim scholars to adopt the ideological constructs or the positions of Western feminism generally or of Western feminist art criticism specifically.<sup>37</sup> Rather, it is an appeal to broaden our own architectural criticism, which has already made its own contribution in recognizing the profound problems of cultural continuity and authenticity as important elements to assert in the face of a "historical rupture" that has torn the cultural fabric of Muslim societies. It is now pertinent to expand our concerns further and recognize the needs of women as well as their unique contributions to building society and buildings in a Muslim world in the throes of rapid change.

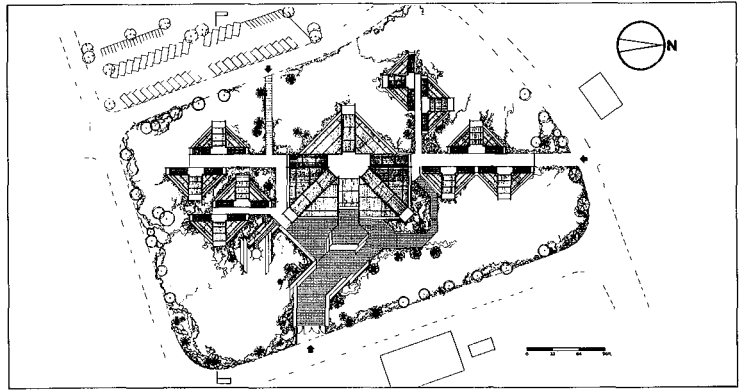
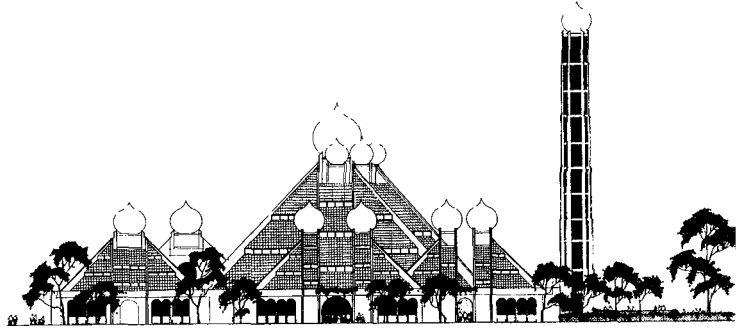
Such a gender-sensitive architectural criticism would have certain characteristics. The key to significant gender-sensitive architectural criticism is to transcend the mere recognition that women architects and women artists exist and to give them due recognition, which hitherto has been lacking. In other words, it should not just be the same old criticism with women added. What is required is to go to the heart of the present critical thinking in art and architecture and to "question the universal validity of those very myths and values and cultural assumptions that, in the past, have automatically excluded from the domain of Art the experiences of half of our population".<sup>38</sup> Or as Carol Duncan pointed out, "The value of established art thinking and how it functions as ideology must be critically analysed, not promoted anew."<sup>39</sup>

This brings us fully to the heart of this seminar's subject. Architectural criticism in Muslim societies has seldom been as ideologically charged as it is when discussing the spiritual-temporal link and religious architecture specifically. Some would restrict the allowable architectural vocabulary to a few traditional elements. Others would insist that only Muslims can build mosques (a historically inaccurate statement) and discussion of the subject tends to become so ideologically charged that dialogue, so essential to expand knowledge, is severely constrained.

In bringing to the fore the need to develop gender-sensitive architectural criticism, we underline the need to bring to bear the



*Fawizah Kamal's project for the Balai Islam, an Islamic centre at Penang, Malaysia, uses the traditional architectural vocabulary in simplified modern garb (both right). Noteworthy is the proportion of prayer space (800 worshippers) allowed for women, which at 67 percent of the total allowed for men (1,200 worshippers) is higher than in most mosques (left). Photographs: Mimar, 1981*



modern tools of critical analysis, to deconstruct the discipline of architectural criticism itself,<sup>40</sup> so as to rebuild it anew, informed and enlightened by the process of critical deconstruction itself. To rebuild it with new insight that will not just be beneficial to establishing a place for women in Muslim art and architecture, not just to liberate their expressive and talented contributions as women, but to transcend feminism and through this rethinking of architectural criticism itself, to make a contribution to liberating the evolving cultures of Muslim societies. To liberate these cultures from insisting on defining themselves in the negative terms of how they must be different from the rejected Western Other, to a new position where they can define themselves in the positive terms of their own achievements and fulfilment.

## Notes

1. It might be instructive here to consider a parallel that can be made between the evolution of the role of the mosque in Muslim society and that of women in Muslim society, from the simple early times to the complex and variegated present. In the beginning the mosque was not only a space for prayer; it was also the place where all important matters for the community were discussed and decided. It was a space that integrated the spiritual and the temporal. Likewise, early Islam redefined the role of women as the centre of the family, one who integrates and nurtures. The role and place of the mosque have varied from time to time and from one place to another. The form, structure, and overall appearance of the mosque have reflected a similar evolution and variation.

In a similar manner, the role and place of Muslim women have varied from place to place and over time. In the case of mosque function and appearance and in the case of women's role and place, positive and negative changes have occurred over time, the result of prevailing and changing political, social, and economic conditions, not of changes in religious doctrine or something intrinsically Islamic.

Keeping in mind that societal changes have affected even the mosque, that most important of buildings in Muslim society, the role of women as the integrating and nurturing forces of the family and as co-architects of Muslim society has been equally affected — sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. These ideas are currently being developed in research being carried out by Afaf Mahfouz and to be published in 1992.

2. See *inter alia* Paul Collier, *Women in Development: Defining the Issues*, WPS 129 (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 1988).

3. See The World Bank, *World Development Report, 1990*, WDR 90 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

4. See Paul Collier, *Women and Structural Adjustment* (Oxford: Oxford University, February 1989), mimeo.

5. UNICEF's work provides ample evidence of that. See UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children: 1989* (New York United Nations Children's Fund, 1989).

6. See the analyses prepared by Women's World Banking.

7. For a detailed review of the Grameen Bank experience, see Mahabub Hossain, *Credit for Alleviation of Rural Poverty: The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh*, Research Report no. 65, International Food Policy Research Institute/Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (Washington, D.C./Dhaka: February 1988). For a review of its *architectural* side, see Ismail Serageldin, *al-Tajdid wal Ta'asil fi 'Imarat al Mujtamaat al-Islamiyya* (Innovation and Authenticity in the

Architecture of Muslim Societies) (Geneva: AKA, 1989), pp. 90-97. *Mimar* 33 (December 1989); also *Mimar* 34 (March 1990).

8. *Mimar* 33 (December 1989): 19.

9. See I. Serageldin, "Individual Identity Group Dynamics and Islamic Resurgence", in Ali E.H. Dessouki (ed.), *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World* (New York: Praeger, 1982), pp. 54-66.

10. See *inter alia* Ma'ruf al-Dawaliby, *Wad' al-Mar'a fil Islam* (The Status of Women in Islam) (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, 1981), and Muhammad Abu Zahra, *Tanzim al-Islam lil Mujtama'* (Islam's Organization of Society) (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, 1975), pp. 5-14.

11. There is a vast literature on the question of polygamy in Islam, but pre-Islamic Arabia included many other forms of marriage which Islam prohibited. See *inter alia*, El-Sayid Sabeq, *Fiqh al-Sunna* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1971) 3rd ed., 1977, vol. 2, pp. 8-9.

12. See *inter alia* El-Sayid Sabeq, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 602-603.

13. Muhammad Abu Zahra, *al-Shafei* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi, 1978), pp. 158-161.

14. See the full text of this *fatwa* (legal opinion) in Muhammad Imara, ed., *al-A'mal al-Kamila lil Imam Muhammad Abduh* (The Complete Works of the Imam Muhammad Abduh) (Beirut: al-Mu'assassah al-Arabiyya lil Dirasat wal Nashr, 1972), vol. 2, pp. 90-95.

15. See Fatima Mernissi, *Sultanes oubliées (Femmes chefs d'Etat en Islam)* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1990).

16. See Ismail Serageldin, "Comments", in Center for Arab Unity Studies, *Islam and Arab Nationalism* (in Arabic) (Beirut, 1981), pp. 605-610.

For a writer who takes the same derivative approach from universal human rights to the specificities of women's issues, but arrives at diametrically opposed conclusions, see Ali A.W. Wafi, *Huquq al-Insan fil Islam* (Human Rights in Islam) (Cairo: Dar Nahdat Masr, 1979).

17. For the case of Egypt, for example, see Earl L. Sullivan, *Women in Egyptian Public Life* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1987).

18. Cf. Soraya al-Turki, *Women in Saudi Arabia: Ideology and Behaviour among the Elite* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 152.



19. These women are usually expected to, and usually manage to, maintain their traditional societal roles of wife and mother, as well as their professional careers. See E.L. Sullivan, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

20. The issues facing women architects in these countries are not dissimilar to those facing their sisters in the West. See *Progressive Architecture* (March 1977), a special issue devoted to women in architecture.

21. Clare Lorenz, *Women in Architecture, a Contemporary Perspective* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990). See especially the Introduction (pp. 8-9) and the appended Statistics (pp. 143-144).

22. See Jamel Akbar, *Crisis in the Built Environment: The Case of the Muslim City* (Singapore/Leiden: Mimar Books/Concept Media/E.J. Brill, 1988), esp. pp. 17-22 and p. 202 (note 1 in chap. 1). See also his discussion of changes in the traditional forms of submission on pp. 45-46.

23. Janet Abu-Lughod observed that: "Islamic law... recognised that the misuse of urban property or the creation of a nuisance discommoded adjacent neighbours more than it adversely affected those living far from the scene. It therefore left to informal agreements between adjacent co-residents the right to mutually restrict each other's property usage in such a way that urban development would not infringe on the privacy or property rights of each other. When such agreements were lacking or unenforced, litigation was required to redress the grievance. The prevalence of cases revolving around building height and their threatened invasion of the visual privacy of a neighbour's interior court, or the number of cases of litigation over the obstruction of access to an individual dwelling by occupation of a common easement testify to the manner in which neighbours exercised control over the development of their immediate vicinity." Janet Abu-Lughod, "Contemporary Relevance of Islamic Urban Principles", in Aydin Gemen (ed.), *Islamic Architecture and Urbanism* (Dammam: King Faisal University, 1983), p. 67.

24. Janet Abu-Lughod, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

25. See Jacques Dumarçay, *The House in South East Asia*, Images of Asia Series, trans. and ed. by Michael Smithies (Singapore/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). See specifically pp. 39-40, where the Minangkabau house is described, and p. 69, where the argument of the impact of social change is presented.

26. See Walter Edwards, *Modern Japan through Its Weddings: Gender, Person and Society in Ritual Portrayal* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989).

27. See F.G. Notehelfer's review of Edwards' *Modern Japan through Its Weddings: Gender, Person and Society in Ritual Portrayal*, *op. cit.*, in *The Annals* 513 (January 1991): 169.

28. Even Saudi Arabia, arguably the most conservative country in this respect, has long supported the professional role of women in the health and education sectors. In architecture, however, the International Symposium on Islamic Architecture and Urbanism recommended that women should be allowed to be fully trained professionals. The recommendation states:

By virtue of their position in the society, women have a particular and indispensable perspective of the needs of the family and its demands for the built environment. Some mechanism must be found to solicit and to integrate their knowledge and needs into planning.

Women's opinion relating to the built environment must be considered, translated into realistic specifications and incorporated in the design process. Without women social researchers and trained professionals in architecture and planning, this process will not or cannot be fully achieved.

Therefore, a comprehensive training programme at the university level should be established to prepare a cadre of women professionals who can:

Conduct studies of space utilization and family needs;

Understand the process of architectural design and city planning to translate these needs into terms useful to architects and planners; and

Participate in the decision-making process pertaining to environmental issues.

International Symposium on Islamic Architecture and Urbanism: Recommendations (Dammam: King Faisal University, Saudi Arabia, 1980), pp. 28-29. Pursuant to that resolution, a special architecture programme for girls was established at King Faisal University in Dammam. There was talk of opening a similar programme in Riyadh, but the experiment has not been continued.

29. See *inter alia* Mino Vianello and Renata Siemienska, *Gender Inequality: A Comparative Study of Discrimination and Participation* (Sage Publications, 1990), esp. pp. 122-157.

30. Among their outstanding output we must also list their contributions to architectural thinking. See *inter alia* Laleh Bakhtiar and Nader Ardalan, *A Sense of Unity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

31. See B.B. Taylor, "Women in Design", *Mimar*, no. 2 (1981): 27, the "Theme Introduction" to a special issue devoted to the work of women architects.

32. For example, see interviews with women designers in *Mimar*, no. 2, *op. cit.* Also *Progressive Architecture*, *op. cit.* (March 1977): 28-29, special issue on "Women in Architecture".
33. See Udo Kultermann, "Kuwait Tower", *Mimar*, no. 2 (1981): 40-41.
34. It is notable that her star Saudi pupils are now published in their own right. See "Mona Khalid al-Dossary and Ghada Abdul Aziz al-Mogren", in Clare Lorenz, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.
35. See Phillip Johnson and Mark Wigley, *Deconstructivist Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1988), pp. 68-79.
36. *Mimar*, no. 2 (1981): 38-39, from whose text the description is also taken.
37. For an excellent survey article of the subject, the reader is referred to Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Mathews, "The Feminist Critique of Art History", *The Art Bulletin* 69, no. 3 (September 1987): 326-357. See especially their sections IV and V (pp. 346-357).  
Showing that there are no monolithic views on the subject that excellent survey article was poorly reviewed by Casandra Langer, "Feminist Art History: Critique Critiqued", *Women Artist News* 12, nos. 5-6 (Fall/Winter 1987): 38.  
For a scholarly compendium of essays, see the anthology of American work given in Norma Broude and Mary Garrard (eds.), *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany* (New York, 1982).  
For a review of significant recent works, see Ellen Handy, "Women, Art, Feminism", *Arts Magazine* (May 1989): 25-31.
38. Norma Broude, in her "Review of Germaine Greer's *Obstacle Race*, Munro's *Originals* and Loeb's *Feminist Collage*", *Art Journal* 41 (1981): 182.
39. Carol Duncan, "When Greatness is a Box of Wheaties", *Art Forum* (October 1975): 64.
40. For such a consistently radical position on methodology, albeit from a narrow Western feminist perspective, refer to Griselda Pollock, "Women, Art, and Ideology: Questions for Feminist Art Historians", *Women's Art Journal* (Spring/Summer, 1983): 42-44.

## Comments

*Hayat Salam*



*Clad in white or in black, women are traditionally covered from head to toe when entering a mosque.  
Photographs: Courtesy of S.O.M.*



Rather than commenting directly on the preceding paper, I would like to complement it by introducing other dimensions of the multifaceted world of “women, piety and architecture”, as this is the only time the topic will be addressed. I will therefore discuss two aspects directly related to women and religious architecture, namely, the usage of architecture by women and the patronage of architecture by women.

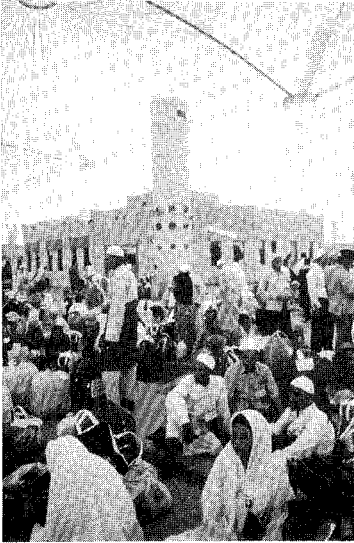
### Usage

How do women use public spaces of piety in Islam and what public spaces do they use?<sup>1</sup> The mosque today is essentially a man’s world and is still a highly gendered entity where women are tolerated rather than integrated by having access to a mezzanine, or a side entrance, or a specific corner. According to regional variations this secondary role may vary: in Jakarta, women go to mosques but are covered (preferably in white); in Iran, women always go to mosques but do not intermingle with men; in Turkey, older women, considered unattractive, move more freely in mosques; in most of the Arab world women usually do not participate in mosques, while in parts of the world where Muslims are a minority, the mosque becomes a multipurpose building where women have to be accommodated.

If the mosque is a man’s world, there is one space of piety in Islam which is considered neutral and where women can participate, that is in pilgrimage at the time of the Hajj, a time when the propriety of normal conduct is suspended. In the Haram women are treated equally but this is rather a unique situation which is not part of daily life. There are, on the other hand, settings where Muslim women can express their piety and feel totally at ease, namely, in cemeteries and in shrines. In these two instances women feel more at home than men.

Cemeteries are used as public places of religious expression where women feel safe and secure, where there is a lesser awareness of their gender. In Islam, the dead should be visited, especially twice a year during feast times and also on weekdays (preferably on Thursdays and Fridays).<sup>2</sup> Men go briefly to cemeteries to perform a duty, but women make an outing of it, and the visiting of the dead becomes a woman’s domain. The cemetery becomes a place of religious expression for women where they participate actively and where they often go to spend the day.

Apart from cemeteries, shrines become spaces and active centres for religious expression, places where women congregate. They are used as havens of peace and quiet and as places where women feel they can go to solve their problems and be with other women. A study by Fatima Mernissi of activities in shrines in North Africa in general and Morocco in particular<sup>3</sup> describes the shrines as very active places where women go for a variety of reasons: to be left



*At the time of the Hajj the propriety of normal conduct is somewhat lifted and men and women intermingle more freely. The Jeddah airport terminal. Architects: Skidmore, Owings and Merrill & Partners  
Photograph: Courtesy of S.O.M.*

alone; to ask for favours from the saints, for example, help in solving problems usually related to marital issues and infertility; and to offer sacrifice if their wish is granted. In shrines, men come and leave quickly, but women, especially those with problems, stay much longer. In shrines, women cry and scream feeling totally at ease in communicating directly with the saints. In that sense the shrine has a very therapeutic effect on women. Women not only go to solve their problems and talk to the saints but also to seek comfort from other women and to socialize. A great variety of experiences reflecting individual needs takes place in a shrine. But most importantly, there women are the secure owners of the premises and the sanctuary gives them an escape, a setting where they can assert themselves.<sup>4</sup>

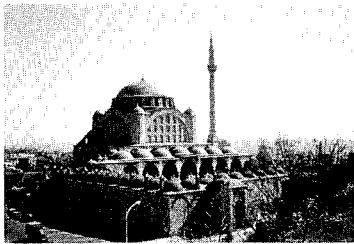
In a patriarchal society, women seek through saints a greater share of power and control. This is further strengthened by the fact that there are many women saints in Islam. In a thirteenth-century manuscript there is mention of women saints enjoying the same rights and privileges as male saints, and in the fifteenth century a book was written in Damascus about women saints, thus indicating the existence of a large enough number to justify such a book.<sup>5</sup>

Some were saints because they were the mothers, sisters, or daughters of saints, while others were saints in their own right and were known for the deeds and miracles they performed, usually on children and the sick. Two examples of women saints in Cairo are Sayyidah Nafisah, an eighth century saint who created a space to which women flock. Much respected in her own day, she was buried in a tomb which she herself had built. She had suggested Sunday as a special day of visits to her shrine, and this has continued until today with crowds gathering at the time of evening prayers. The second example is that of Sayyidah Zaynab, the granddaughter of the Prophet, who gave her name to a whole quarter of Cairo. The mosque named after her, although new, is much frequented.<sup>6</sup>

### **Patronage**

The second point I would like to present in relation to women and architecture is that of patronage and women's historical participation in the built environment of the Muslim world.

If we take the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent for example, considered the golden age of Ottoman culture and a topic of recent interest, we have Suleyman as the most important monarch of the sixteenth century and his court architect Sinan building an impressive number of remarkable monuments; it was also a time when women were actively as well as passively involved in architecture. Suleyman's wife Hasseki Hurrem was the first to commission Sinan in 1537. He constructed for her a *kulliyeh*, a complex of buildings including a kitchen, a madrasah, a mosque, and a hospital endowed for sick women of any creed or colour. This was the first monument built



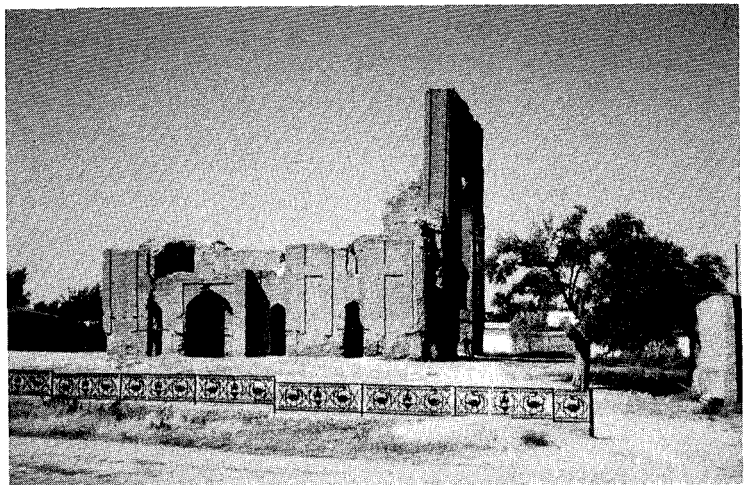
*The mosque of Mihrimah, a masterpiece of Ottoman architecture, was built by Sinan in Istanbul for Mihrimah, the daughter of Suleyman.*  
 Photograph: Ü. Bates

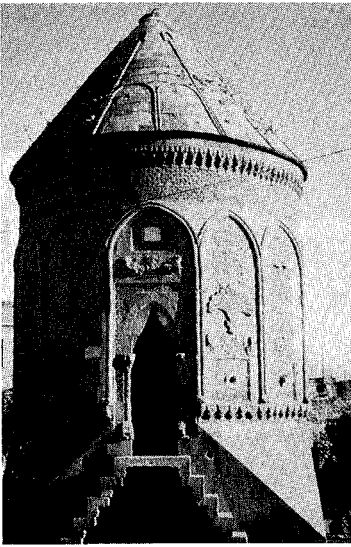
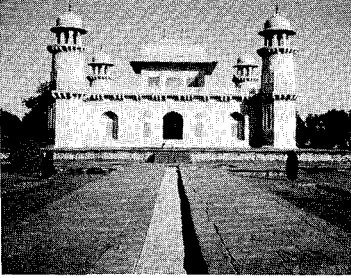
by Sinan in the capital, and with that commission she was instrumental in the nomination of Sinan as court architect, a position he was to keep for half a century.<sup>7</sup> The same Hasseki Hurrem, some twenty years later (in 1556), commissioned Sinan also for a *hammam*, or bath, near the Topkapi Palace, a symmetrical building half for men and half for women. Not only did Hurrem commission two important buildings herself, but Suleyman also endowed several religious and charitable institutions in Hurrem's name and established *waqfs* in towns and villages for their upkeep.<sup>8</sup> Another woman of the time involved with architecture was Mihrimah, Suleyman's daughter, for whom Sinan built an impressive mosque, one of his masterpieces in terms of light and unity of space.<sup>9</sup>

Another city in the limelight today is Samarkand, and we find there also two perfect examples of Timurid architecture associated with women. One, a mosque, the most perfect example we have of a four-iwan plan, is known as the Mosque of Bibi Khanum; the other, a mausoleum, the Ishrat Khaneh, was endowed by the wife of the Timurid ruler Abu-Said to ensure its maintenance as a burial place for women of the family. When the capital moved from Samarkand to Herat, a woman again, Gawhar Shah, wife of Shah Rukh, distinguished herself as a true patron of the arts and of architecture with madrasahs and mosques built by her both in Mashhad and in Herat.<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere, there are many well-known monuments built by men for women as, for example, the twelfth-century Abbasid octagonal tomb of Sitti Zaynab built by al-Nasir for his mother, and others by women for men as, for example, in Mughal India, the case of Nur Mahal Begum, wife of Jihangir, erecting in Agra a tomb for her father I'timad al-Dawla.<sup>11</sup>

It is true that the examples above are from large cities, and their patrons were important influential women, but there are also in small villages and towns as well as in rural areas a very large number

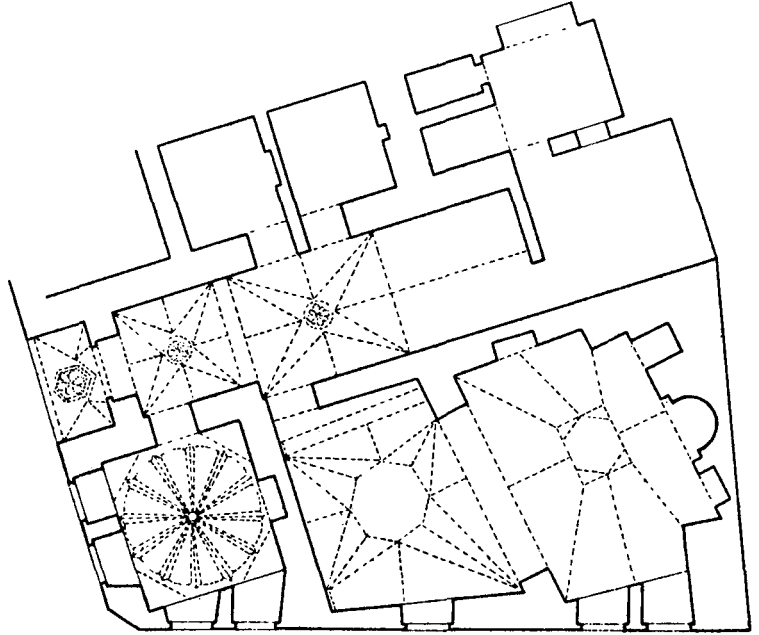
*The Ishrat Khaneh in Samarkand is a mausoleum endowed by the wife of the Timurid ruler Abu-Said to ensure a burial place for women of the family.*  
 Photograph: Hatice Yazar/Aga Khan Program Archives





*The Mausoleum of I'timad al-Dawla in Agra (top) was built by his daughter Nur Mahal Begum, wife of Jihangir. The Khatuniyyah (top, right) is a funerary madrasah built in Tripoli, Lebanon, in A.D. 1373-74 in accordance with the will of Arghun Khatun, the freed-slave wife of the Mamluk Amir 'Izz al-Din Aydamir. Typical of Anatolian tomb-towers is the Döner Kumbet (above) built for Shah Jihan Khatun in Kayseri, about A.D. 1275.*

*Photographs: ACSAA/Aga Khan Program Archives; Ü Bates Plan: Courtesy of H. Salam*



of monuments associated with women patrons. In Syria and Palestine numerous small mosques and madrasahs of the Mamluk period were endowed by women — wives or daughters of local emirs. In Anatolia many of the typically Seljuk turbes and tombs dotting the countryside were built by women or for women. A study by Ülkü Bates shows that 20 percent of all funerary structures, built before the Ottoman period and perceived as architectural symbols of dominance in formerly Christian territory, belong to women. This indicates that the social and political participation of women in Seljuk society was greater than their formal political status would suggest.<sup>12</sup>

So, historically, women have played an active role in the creation of the physical environment of Muslims and have endowed major as well as minor building programmes. My question now is the following: is this involved patronage, whatever its reasons, still present in our contemporary world? I am afraid the answer is in the negative and we may want to try and explain the reasons behind such a change.

## Notes

1. This paper has benefited from discussions, on the usage of architecture by women, with Renata Holod, whom I would especially want to thank for having introduced me to the publications of Fatima Mernissi.
2. See James Dickie, "Allah and Eternity: Mosques, Madrasahs and Tombs", in George Michell, *Architecture of the Islamic World* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), p. 46.
3. Fatima Mernissi, "Women Saints and Sanctuaries", *Signs* 3 (1977): 100-111.
4. For other issues related to the status of women in Islam, see by the same author: *Beyond the Veil* (Cambridge: Sankman Publishing Company, 1975), and *Doing Daily Battle: Interviews with Moroccan Women* (London: Women's Press, 1984).
5. Charis Waddy, *Women in Muslim History* (New York: Longman, 1980), p. 60.
6. *Ibid.*, relevant information scattered throughout the book.
7. Esin Atil, *The Age of Sultan Sulayman the Magnificent* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1987), pp. 26-287.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Henri Stierlin, *Soliman et l'architecture ottomane* (Fribourg: Office du Livre, 1985), pp. 169-171.
10. See, for example, John D. Hoag, *Islamic Architecture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1977), pp. 262-263; 275; 265-266; 268, respectively.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 377.
12. Ülkü Bates, "Women as Patrons of Architecture in Turkey", in Nikki Keddie and Lois Beck (eds.), *Women in the Muslim World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 245-260.



## **Discussion**

### **Jale Erzen**

What is Islamic about Islamic architecture is not only the mosque. To a greater extent it is the mentality about and social structuring of women that have given form to architecture in Islamic countries. This is evident in the form of the residence and its relation to the urban order. Moreover, all public places are designed with men in mind and to segregate women. Women's spaces remain a black blind spot. It is remarkable how, even when modern conditions in the city are discussed, this point is ignored even by architects designing for the city. Even in very closed Islamic societies, a concern for women's space could very well supply the new blood for architectural expressions, albeit within the codes of Islam. To limit the issue of women's space to how well they can be hidden in the mosque seems to me to be evidence that on the whole Islam's primary issue has been the segregation of women.

### **Martin Frishman**

Regarding the role of women in Islamic society, I would like to say that architectural criticism cannot be disconnected from social and humanistic philosophy and principles, otherwise it would become worthless. If we consider the house, all its elements — the courtyard, the tree, the water — existed millennia before Islam. The one characteristic, alas, which distinguishes a house in many parts of the Islamic world is the separation within it and its neighbourhood, of male and female circulation.

### **Inajati Adrisijanti**

Considering the role of women in Muslim societies, I invite the speakers to widen their area of observation to include facts from Indonesian history pertaining to women from the pre-Islamic period to the present. There were many women rulers, for instance in Aceh (in North Sumatra and Central Java), and several women naval commanders and army generals. One of these women commanders is known to have sent naval troops in 1511 to free Malacca from the Portuguese. In more recent times, it is important to mention that women's emancipation in the Western sense was first evoked in Indonesia by a Javanese princess, Kartini, at the beginning of the twentieth century. There are also many women's organizations for the promotion of the status of women, the oldest and the biggest being the 'Aisiyiah. In Indonesian society there is no seclusion of women, and if there are women who are still "taking a back seat" or considered second-class citizens, it is not because of religion.

### **Selma al-Radi**

I think there is no doubt that historically there have been even in Muhammad's Mediterranean Basin women who were queens in

their own right, who led governments. There was certainly one in Yemen. There were also women ministers, and today there are women ministers, but it is only a small percentage of the population. The question is, how do you widen it? How do you make the position of women equal to that of men within the context of Islam? I am not very optimistic, and I do not think there is in any way equality in Islam for women. There are many women who do manage to rise in their profession, but those are definitely the minority, in Indonesia as well as elsewhere. The vast majority of women are definitely isolated to their space in Islam which is simply the house, and even if in certain countries they are allowed to receive an education, at the age of fourteen or fifteen they get pulled out by their fathers and get married. Very few manage to rise above this.

### **Hayat Salam**

There is more variety within the different parts of the Muslim world regarding the status of women than regarding architecture. Even if a few generalizations could be applied throughout, the status of women and its relation to architecture differ in each geographic area and within each socio-economic set-up.

### **Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim**

The position of women in architecture within the context of Islam is a fundamental issue. I don't think it is an issue that concerns only women; it concerns all of us and I would go even further to say, it's so fundamental to the development of Islamic societies in their present situation or present crisis that in fact this relation between men and women is the core of the problem of our societies today. Countless examples of what is keeping us as a society from even being part of today's world boils down to the relationship between men and women in society. What needs to be liberated is not women as such, individually or collectively, but the relationship between men and women. In exploring the role of women and its impact in our history and in the present, I think we ought to look at the informal sector of our society. I would suggest that we look at the role of women in Nubian society today where countless examples demonstrate their responsibility in shaping the form of the village by actually organizing it, building it, decorating it, repairing it, as well as contributing to its economic organization. This is not only true for Nubia but also for Gaza and many parts of the Egyptian circle, and I think the same applies to most informal rural structures elsewhere.

Another aspect is squatter settlements or informal development. In urban as well as rural Egypt the effectiveness of the process of informal building, which now accounts for more than 80 percent of the building stock, is based on the role played in that process

by women. Given the weakness of our formal structure and the inability of the formal structure to deliver services and to deliver housing, the role women play in practical terms, in financing and supervising building, and managing health and education is quite substantial.

Finally a very interesting notion mentioned in passing by Dr. Mahfouz, “feminizing development”, needs to be expanded on. I wish this notion could include spaces of interaction and social encounters between men and women because the street, the square, the shop are all places where interaction between men and women takes place. What would be the form of a public space in a Muslim community today in which a healthy and creative encounter between the sexes could take place?

#### **Ismail Serageldin**

In addressing the issue of women and poverty, there is no doubt in my mind that to raise the level of any society — for example, reducing infant mortality and raising life expectancy — a fundamental improvement in the status of women is absolutely essential. Reaching women is a major factor of social change.

As His Highness said in his opening speech, Indonesia has achieved a remarkable performance in reducing its poverty on a macro scale from 60 to 18 percent in one generation. This is an unequalled achievement, and the factor of change has been reaching out to women to alter practices in the home. I think therefore that we are not trapped into falling into development patterns of the past but can learn how to move from traditional Western patterns by creating new patterns, to be accommodated to each society.

#### **Salma Samar Damluji**

The question of women in Islam is a complex issue. I am hardly in a position of authority to comment on this, since it is neither my subject nor my field of speciality, but having been singled out as the only woman architect at this seminar, I would like to respond to the following points raised in Dr. Mahfouz’s paper.

On the role of women in Muslim society and why there are not enough women architects as a predominant force in society, I would note that the recognition of women architects in society is very much determined by the measure of creativity and performance of a woman as architect or designer. It is not a case of suppression or intended domination by the male factor. Architecture is a demanding profession which requires a full-time commitment that eventually presides over many features that constitute a woman’s natural role in society or the prerequisites of a traditional domestic life. Nevertheless, the challenge is there for her to pursue either choice, or struggle to keep the balance between the two. The point is that finally courage is required from both men and women in society

to change the fixed pattern of this undermined role of women, while the responsibility lies equally upon both. Regarding the point Dr. Mahfouz raised on competing with male peers, the concept of competing as such is unnecessary. The principle of competition in this case is negative, since the issue, actually, is profoundly related to the integration of women in society — and ultimately aiming at her effective contribution on a cultural, socio-economic, and multidisciplinary level towards the formation of a developed and modern Muslim society. Unfortunately both modern feminist and Islamic fundamentalist movements, respectively, have reduced the role of women and accentuated her isolation.

On the relationship of women to Islamic space such as the mosque, I fear that her place there is technically inferior. In the Regent's Park Mosque in London, I was shocked to find out, during the funeral of a colleague recently, that women were allowed to participate in the death prayer only if they stood discreetly against the prayer hall back wall. One was made to understand that it would be preferable if they did not enter at all. Surely the spiritual essence of Islam, at such an exceptional circumstance, transcends that.

It is interesting to note that where a rupture has not occurred in the development of a society, and I am referring here to the Arab experience, women are by far "liberated" in the ways of practical everyday life. The Bedu women of 'Abr and Thamud in southern Yemen drive their Toyotas across the desert unveiled. In Mahrah country, on the Yemeni border with Oman, women are at the forefront in the home receiving guests and entertaining in the absence of male members of the family. In Dali' they actively contribute in building, rendering and painting houses. In Yafi women are the major work force, contracted by the Ministry of Housing to build roads. These same working women of Yafi, who command the highest dowry in the South owing to their beauty, change their attire and yellow and red facial make-up several times a day to maintain their attractiveness and appeal. In this context, to comment on the statement that women are seen as objects of desire — although "object" is a derogatory term for a human being — why should not a woman be synonymous with inspiring desire?

The parallel drawn between women and architecture may be perfectly illustrated in the point mentioned regarding women being the "anchor of society". This may be exemplified best in the architecture of the multi-storey Yemeni house. In Hadramaut the structure of the eight-floor mud-brick house is supported by exterior load-bearing walls (80 cm thickness at the base tapering to 15 cm at roof level), and a solid rectangular staircase core termed '*Arus al-Rigad*: '*Arus* meaning "the bride" and '*Rigad* meaning "the stairs". When I asked why this central structural element was called '*Arus*, the master builder replied: "It is because the woman is the pillar of the building: '*Imad al-Dar*." This is true all over Hadramaut, whether the building is of mud brick or stone or whether it is two

or eight storeys high. However, it is ironic to add that the woman is referred to as the pillar, justifiably encased beneath the exterior walls, and the women of Hadramaut, the most conservative enclave in the South, are covered up from the early age of puberty and their faces never publicly exposed. But whereas the term is Hadrami builders' jargon and ancient by architectural tradition, the severe covering-up in black shrouds is more recent. It is interesting to note by contrast that the Dali' traditional house, built in several storeys of stone, has the same central core for the staircase, which takes up a third of the interior plan. Yet here it is termed *al-Fahl*, "the male", in a society where women are liberated, uncovered, and play an active role on a multidisciplinary level.

#### **Afaf Mahfouz**

The observations of Abdelhalim Abdelhalim, Salma Damluji, and Inajati Adrisijanti are well taken and I would have loved to answer each in detail since this is my field. I feel more frustrated than ever because I confined myself for this presentation to cater to an audience of architects, and did not go to my own field of women in development. There are many things to be dealt with: the informal sector, what was said about Yemen, competition — all should have been addressed in many ways at a more appropriate level. It is frustrating not to be speaking about women in development, women in society, or the social process but only about women in space and linking it to buildings. And I would have loved to speak about women builders, using the metaphor, not buildings as you architects use it from your point of view. I can say that I agree with Mohammed Arkoun's suggestion for a seminar to study the Quran and society with an equal number of women and men participating. This is not competition. This would be healthy competition between women and women, men and men, women and men. Competing is constructive. I think we should be equally there, visible and participating in the future, discussing many things of interest for the Muslim society.

#### **Syed Zaigham Shafiq Jaffery**

I would like to add a few words to what Dr. Mahfouz and others have been saying. Architectural space around men and women — the interpersonal space as well as the interrelated architectural space — is defined in most Muslim countries, and everybody is used to it from the president to the peasants as long as it is men who command the space. Privately it does not matter; there women may command it. But what happens when a woman rises to a position where she commands all the space that lies in front of her? Recently in Pakistan we witnessed an interesting situation. The articulation of space between men and women had exploded, and we did not know how

to deal with it publicly. The official visit of a woman to the state mosque created a situation hard to deal with: the protocol lines, the guards of honour, her husband in a meeting room. This was a situation we were not used to and we did not know how to deal with it architecturally and spatially. So she had to leave, because architecturally we are still not ready to deal with women in power.

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**The Architecture of the Mosque,  
an Overview and Design Directions**  
*Hasan-Uddin Khan*

**Comments**  
*Dogan Kuban*  
*Rasem Badran*

**Discussion**  
*Jale Erzen, Zaenudin Kartadiwirya, Martin Frishman, Kemas  
Madani, Mohammed Arkoun, Saleh Lamei-Mostafa, Raj  
Rewal, Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim, William Lim, Raja Fuziah  
Raja Tun Uda, Djauhari Sumintardja, Asaduz Zaman, Ismail  
Serageldin, Hasan-Uddin Khan*

## **The Architecture of the Mosque, an Overview and Design Directions**

*Hasan-Uddin Khan*

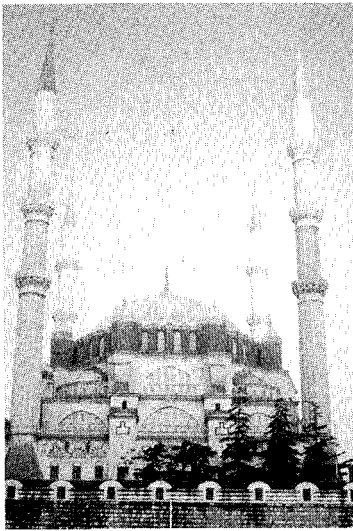
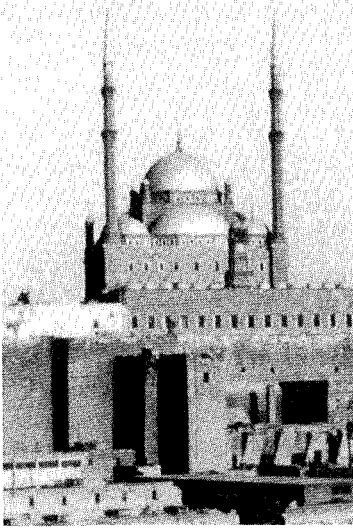
A very large number of mosques have been built during the past twenty-five years throughout the world, commissioned by a variety of clients ranging from governments to private individuals. What follows is a synopsis and a preliminary overview of these buildings, which examined the type in its functional and formal aspects. This work was done in conjunction with Renata Holod of the University of Pennsylvania.<sup>1</sup> The core of the material gathered is based on first-hand studies and questionnaires sent to architects and clients, and work brought to our attention by colleagues. The questionnaires, which are based on the documentation process set up by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, requested and obtained detailed information on the constructional history and economics of each project, the evolution of the design concepts and the architect's statement.

Some eighty buildings were identified and documented in this manner. Others were studied in a more cursory fashion during a number of trips, while still others were brought to our attention by the architects themselves as projects yet unbuilt. The buildings chosen for this study come from a wide range of countries and regions, from Senegal to Indonesia. To the careful student of cultural phenomena, they may seem too diffuse and too diverse a group of artifacts to study in a coherent fashion. Yet, the type of building under scrutiny, the mosque, is by definition one that transcends regional boundaries in its symbolic and functional sense, if not in its formal realizations. It has been historically, and still is at least on a community scale, the central public ritual space for the men (and to a lesser extent, women) of a particular neighbourhood or group. In recent years it has become the organizing nucleus for the planning and layout of new neighbourhoods in the rapidly growing cities of the Islamic world, often in an idealized re-creation of a traditional neighbourhood. The formal interconnections are more self-aware and apparent than may have been suspected, as the details of the professional education and culture of individual architects are traced and the impact of these ties is assessed against often proclaimed regionalist ambitions. Here I look at mosques, not in terms of symbols, but as signs of Muslim presence.

I approach the subject from both the client's and the architect's viewpoints. The subjects of intention (of what was asked for) and of response (the design solution) are the primary areas of concern. Also I emphasize here the product which makes real in actual examples the concepts and abstract ideas about design.

This presentation is in three parts. The first deals with some of the general issues raised by the design of mosques as defined by the client's programme or brief. In the second section examples illustrate the design response to the client's instructions, presenting an overlay in terms of style and design response as the main point of reference. The two overlays give rise to the third part, which draws together underlying issues and discernible directions as a basis





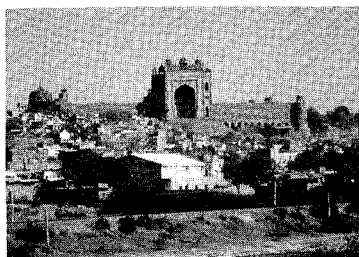
*The Mosque of Muhammad Ali in Cairo (top) built in the 1840s displays classical Ottoman references based on the model of the great mosques developed by Sinan in the 16th century as for example in the Selimiye Mosque at Edirne (above). Architects: Yusuf Bushnaq and Sinan respectively Photographs: N. Rabbat and Ü. Bates*

for further discussion. This is not a historical presentation and it does not discuss directly the elements important in establishing the image of the mosque such as the *mihrab*, the minaret, the dome, and so on, as these have been addressed extensively in most of the literature on mosques.

In the act of ritual prayer, the Muslim affirms individual belief in God. In the act of group prayer, the Muslim affirms his membership in the community of believers and recalls the first community (*ummah*) of the Prophet Muhammad. The focus of that community prayer is the mosque, and it is in this sense that it serves as a bridge between the present and that time. Here follows a discussion of the temporal and regional variations of the mosque, its characteristics and forms. The progressive “sacralization” of its space seems to have taken place, with the transfer of governance and political functions to citadels, palaces, or government houses, and of educational functions to specially constituted buildings such as madrasahs and other schools. Yet the memory and the potential for these functions in the space have remained to the present day. It is interesting to note that in recent years mosques have moved towards a single function, as places of prayer, whereas churches, in general, have tended towards multiple functions, as social centres in order to attract younger people back.

Any study of contemporary architecture in the different regions of the world must pause to take note of the physical and visual surroundings of a building and the ideological selection of forms it was given. The built environment, and its model artifacts, have been selectively valued, even more radically than had been the case prior to the nineteenth century. Ruptures in the continuity of borrowing and uses of the past, the symbolic language of architecture, can be detected in all regions. The Islamic world has been transformed physically and culturally by outright colonialist rule, if not by cultural, economic, and political European hegemony. The effects on the physical environments and on the symbolic systems which created them cannot be underestimated. One need only inspect any city to ascertain the introduction of new urban forms (most often in new settlements) and of new building types.

Representative of the rupture of a symbolic language are two buildings in Egypt: the Mosque of Muhammad Ali built in the 1840s, and the Mausoleum of Zaghlul Pasha built in the 1920s. While Muhammad Ali was independent of central Ottoman control, he chose to display this independence by building what appears, at first glance at least, as a classical Ottoman mosque. The Mausoleum of Zaghlul Pasha, built with neoparaonic references, illustrates the extent of a cultural rupture and dissonance present in Egypt at the time when the commemorative architecture of the Islamic past was hidden behind an ideological curtain. This was an attempt to define identity in terms of the specificity of the land, in nationalist terms, and is the first time that pharaonic models were even considered.



*The Great Mosque of Fatehpur Sikri in Agra, India, is an example of a mosque built under individual patronage yet seen as a symbol of power and state.*

*Photograph: M. Brand/Aga Khan Program Archives*

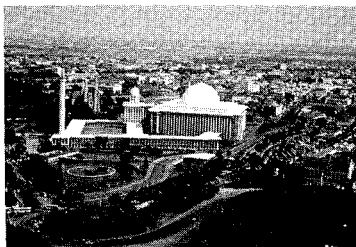
These two examples are used here in an emblematic fashion only to discuss the processes of the formation of these attitudes. Nevertheless, it is necessary to signal the distancing and the rupture which did take place in the intervening decades not only in Egypt but in all regional Islamic cultures.

The rupture with the symbolic and visual past was first achieved by the Turkish Republic as it moved to define itself in purely secular terms and to treat the great past, evident in its monuments, not as a continuous line, but as a far distant, ideological, and inaccessible past to which neither architect nor client could have recourse.

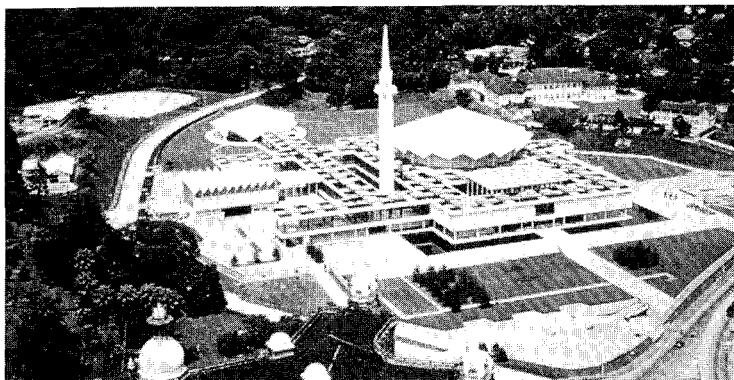
Turkey achieved this refashioning of itself into a nation state in secular terms and became a powerful model for its neighbour, Iran, where Reza Shah moved to build at least the trappings, if not the replication, of the “modern” state, down to the town square. It is my contention that the modernization project of Turkey has been a powerful model throughout the Islamic world, both in the success of its secular forms and symbols, and in ways we have yet to understand, even in terms of its presecular monumental architecture.

While individual clients can be seen to continue the type of patronage responsible for many older mosques, the appearance of newly formed states, particularly after the progressive dissolution of the colonialist empires, has brought a new type of client into the history of mosque patronage, somewhat different from earlier dynastic and private patronage. In the last twenty-five years, these states, whatever their ideology, have increasingly been engaged in mosque-building projects on all levels and on several scales. In these increasingly intensive building programmes can be seen the attempts to create new expressions not only for power, social control, and piety but also for sovereignty, nationality, and modernity. These processes may be viewed against the background of popular architecture, mosques built by artisans and contractors, for a variety of individual or community clients where choices between traditional and nontraditional mosque forms were apparently not as consciously articulated.

The **State as client** presents us with a recent set of buildings. The history of the mosque as building type does record examples of individual mosques which would have served as symbols of the power of a dynasty, and therefore of State, e.g., the Umayyad mosque of Damascus, the Fatih Mosque of Mehmet the Conqueror, or even the Great Mosque of Fatehpur Sikri. Yet these were built under the individual patronage of the current ruler and not that of a corporate structure or a government. The attempt to define one's state in modern and Islamic terms is a thoroughly modern phenomenon, often driven by the special necessity to ascertain and develop an identity in the face of a different, even hostile, majority or neighbour. Such was the case with the new Islamic republics of Pakistan and Malaysia. As political entities, both are post-colonial creations. In other states, such as Indonesia, the mosque also plays



*Kuala Lumpur's Masjid Negara (National Mosque, right), built by the Malaysian government as a state mosque, was the largest mosque in Southeast Asia at the time of its construction (1965). Architect: Dato Baharuddin Abu Kassim. The Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta (above), built by the government of Indonesia following the country's independence, expresses national identity and monumental scale. Architect: F. Silaban. Photographs: M.N. Khan; H.-U. Khan*

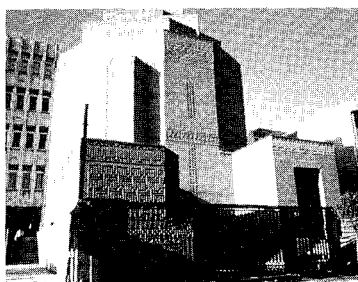


a central and symbolic role. There, the idea of a state mosque is introduced as separate from the mosque of the ruler. It is a building funded and visualized by a committee with an insistence on a clearly recognizable identity. This identity has to be explicit in its regional, modern, and Islamic references. The largest such mosque was proposed for Iraq through an international design competition in 1982. As the building complex was generally seen as a projection of national identity to an international world, the Jakarta State Mosque was planned to be quite large, with a capacity of between five to twenty thousand people under covered space and up to one hundred thousand in the courtyard during major Muslim festivals such as Eid. Interestingly, such a place of prayer traditionally extended its functions to include a madrasah and sometimes an Islamic university, a library, and spaces for social gathering. In this way it reflected a multi-use of space.

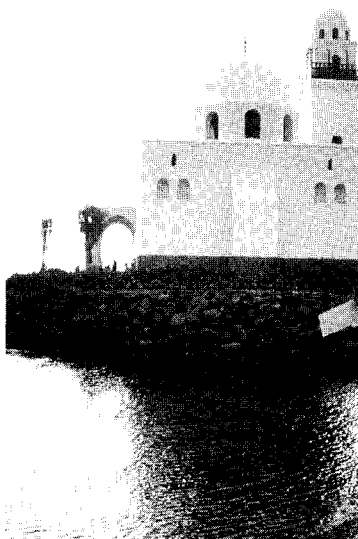
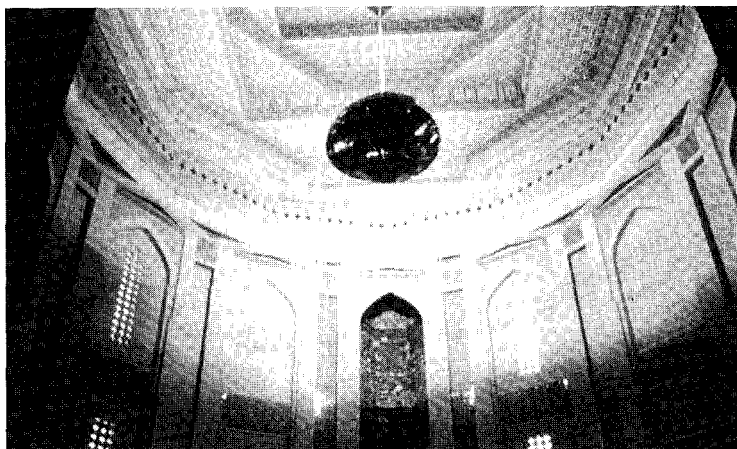
The State as patron, seems to have taken over the role of the king or ruler in building mosques that express nationhood. If state mosques are an expression of political will and national identity, as symbols for the country and the outside world, then mosques built by local authorities can be seen as signs of the concern that the government has for local communities.

With the development of local governments in the nineteenth century, there came a shift of responsibility from individuals and village or town organizations to a more centralized authority. With this centralization came the concept of physical development plans and master plans for urban and rural settlements. In assuming this responsibility, local governments have been obliged to provide religious facilities, just as they provide schools, hospitals, and other facilities to serve the public.

With the advent of the master plan and zoning as organizational devices, the multi-use of the mosque complex was broken down, leading to separate buildings with more limited functions. Twentieth century planning brought with it what one might call the secularization of space. Hence, although the function of the mosque has remained the same, in most instances its context has changed.



Commissioned by a group of local benefactors, the Al-Ghadir Mosque (above and right) in Teheran is an interesting example of a small urban mosque built within the existing fabric of the city. Its design was to a large extent shaped by the restricted dimensions of the site. Architect: Jahanguir Mazlum. The Island Mosque (below) on the Jeddah Corniche in Saudi Arabia, commissioned by the Ministry of Awqaf, illustrates the pattern of local authorities marking a place along the periphery of a settlement. Architect: Abdel-Wahed El-Wakil Photographs: K. Adle/AKAA; C. Abel/AKAA



**Local authorities** in the Islamic world have probably been over the past forty years or so more responsible than individuals or even neighbourhood communities for building urban mosques. They are essentially confronted with building mosques in three contexts: within the existing fabric of a town to define the nucleus of a settlement; to mark a place along a periphery of settlements such as along a corniche or at the entrance of a village; or, as part of a new urban community, usually in new towns or suburbs.

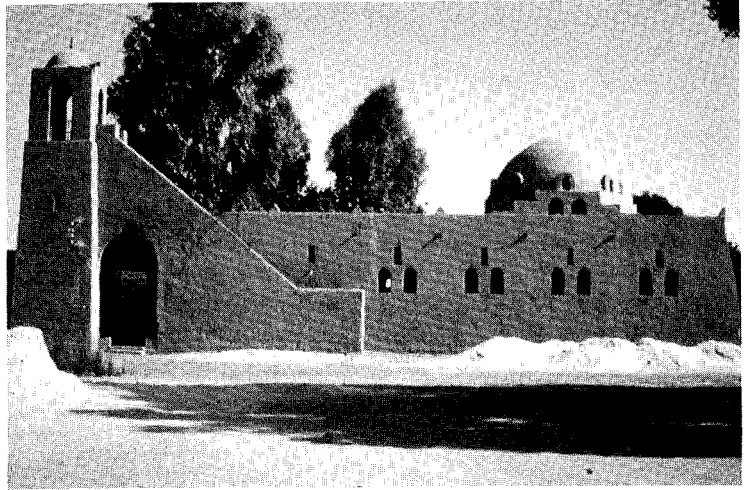
Local government interventions appear to take two forms: either they create a mosque which is individual and special or they create a mosque which may be repeated in similar contexts and situations. In the latter form, the mosque is usually related to a new settlement as is the case in Islamabad in Pakistan, and in Singapore. It should also be noted that local authority interventions are primarily related to urban situations. In considering the design of mosques, it appears that buildings are erected either because of pressure from local inhabitants or because they fit into the local authority's plan which calls for one mosque per so many hundred people — a figure determined by the planning authority itself.

The mosque is, of course, divided both by function and by scale. In considering congregational prayer, governments have essentially turned their attention to the jami which basically serves communal worship every Friday, creating a need for a building conceived on a larger scale than that of a masjid.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the jami has a public role with symbolic and propagandistic undertones which are perforce denied to the masjid. It is in some sense a showpiece to exhibit the benevolent nature of a government concerned with the spiritual well-being of its people. Not surprisingly then, experiments in the architectural evolution of the mosque have concentrated on this mosque type.

**Institutions** form the third major client for mosques. Institutions such as universities, hospitals, airport authorities, etc., also integrate

*The Mosque of New Gournā was conceived as part of a new urban community. Commissioned by the Egyptian Department of Antiquities, the design of New Gournā is one of the earliest modern-day experiments in local vernacular rural town-planning in the Muslim world.*

*Architect: Hassan Fathy  
Photograph: H.-U. Khan*

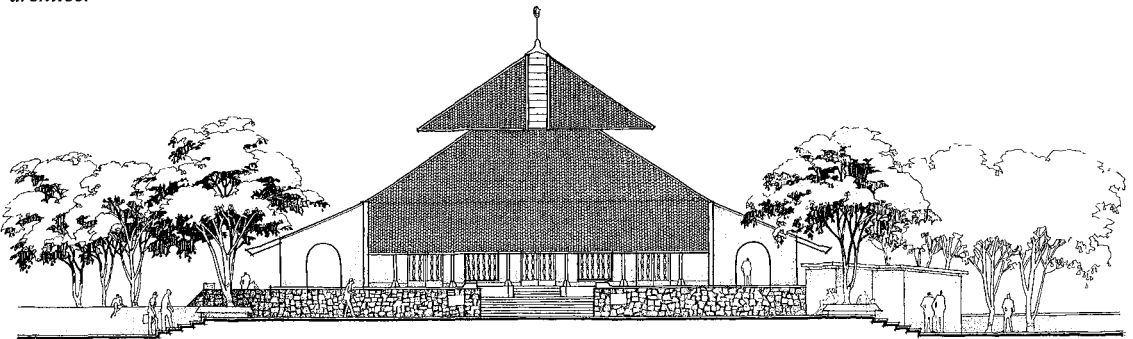


mosques into the design of their complexes. The mosque has become a standard facility in the planning of institutions as a result of broader educational concerns and a recognition of the need for places of collective prayer as part of a modern facility. The historical connections to the traditional mosque-hospital or mosque-school are apparent. The essential legacy of Western modernization with its separation of buildings into functional typologies is currently being questioned in the context of contemporary life in Muslim societies.<sup>3</sup> The size of the mosque is dependent on the number of people in the institution, but the design is usually seen in terms of “maximums” in order to emphasize the importance and size of the institution.

Within these new planning situations the mosque plays an increasingly more central role not only in terms of its function but also in terms of its site. For example, at Jondishapur University in Iran and at the Riyadh International Airport in Saudi Arabia the mosque is centrally located and conceived as a special connector. The place of prayer assumes symbolic importance in signalling the

*The Said Naum Mosque, commissioned by the Municipal Government of Jakarta and Yayasan, is an example of local government intervention where the individual unique mosque design is favoured.*

*Architect: Atelier Enam-Adhi Moersid  
Photograph: Courtesy of the architect*



*One of a number of community mosques built by the Housing Development Board of Singapore, the Darul Aman Mosque illustrates a preference of the vernacular historicist approach.*

*Architect: Asaduz Zaman*

*Photograph: M.N. Khan*



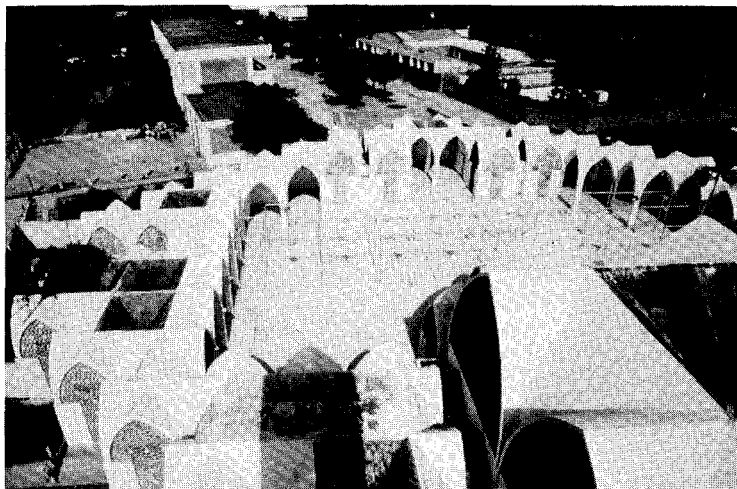
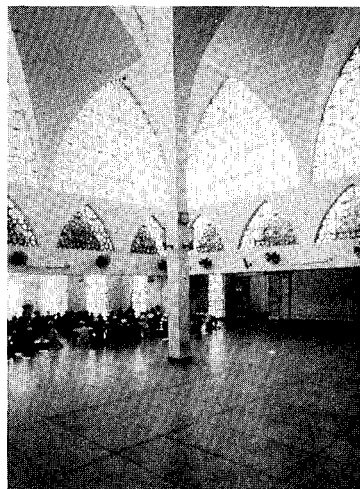
centrality of Islam in the institution. Mosques marking the edge of a city are often visible, as in the case of the cornice in Jeddah where mosques have been built in various styles at about two-mile intervals.

In rural or village **communities**, where traditional beliefs and practices tend to have the upper hand, the function and place of the mosque in relationship to the community have remained much the same as always. In the past such communities were traditionally made up of different groups organized by guilds, casts, or tribes, with each group having a landlord or sheikh as its chief. In some cases a patron, usually a sultan or wealthy landlord, would finance the building of a mosque, but the decision-making process remained collective, thus allowing the community a role in shaping its own environment. Participation in such decisions inevitably provoked

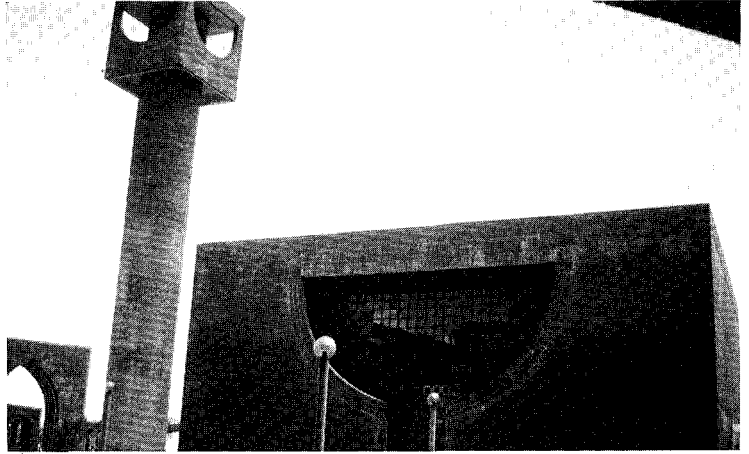
*The Ahle Hadith Mosque in Islamabad, built by the Capital Development Authority, illustrates the phenomenon of repeatable mosques designed to be implanted in planned neighbourhoods throughout Pakistan.*

*Architect: Anwar Saeed/CDA*

*Photographs: I.C. Stewart*



*The mosque of the Islamic Centre for Technical and Vocational Training and Research in Dhaka, Bangladesh, was conceived as the central focus of the campus.  
Architect: Doruk Pamir  
Photograph: D. Pamir/AKAA*

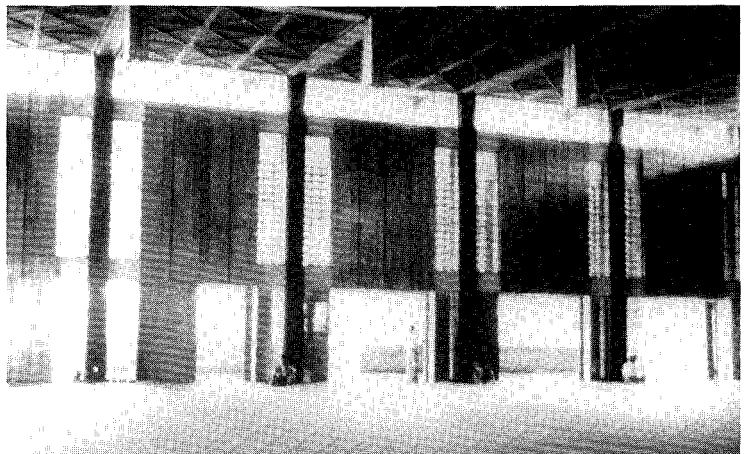


a sense of responsibility and commitment in the community towards its environment because it was actively involved in forming as well as maintaining it.

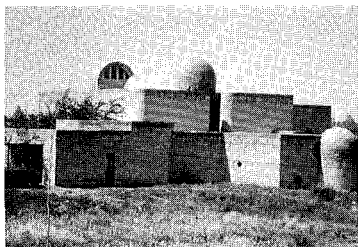
Each group built its own mosque using whatever resources it had as a collectivity, according to local traditions passed down through generations. Such was the case of Yaama Mosque in Niger and Niono Mosque in Mali. No architect, in the modern sense of the word, was necessary and the construction was usually undertaken by a local mason aided by the members of the community. Since the mosque was essentially there to cater to the basic religious needs of the group, it was usually a functional structure and seldom were there any external signs distinguishing it as a mosque because everyone knew what and where it was.

However, the situation today is considerably different, in that the decision-making process has become the affair of centralized government authorities, both on a local and national scale.

*This campus mosque, built by the Foundation for the Development of Salman ITB Campus Mosque, on an existing university campus in Bandung, Java, was designed with the intent of creating a spiritual space of great simplicity.  
Architect: Achmad Noe'man  
Photograph: H.-U. Khan*



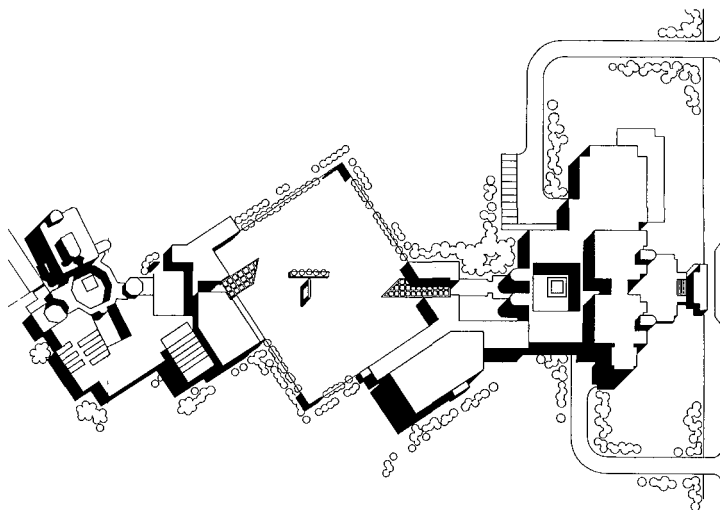




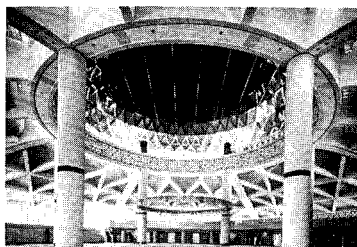
*The Jondishapur University Mosque in Iran is located along the principal walkway connecting the university buildings and as such plays the role of a spatial connector. By its refusal of traditional architectural elements, this is a determinedly modern mosque.*

*Architect: Kamran Diba*

*Photograph: K. Adle/AKAA*



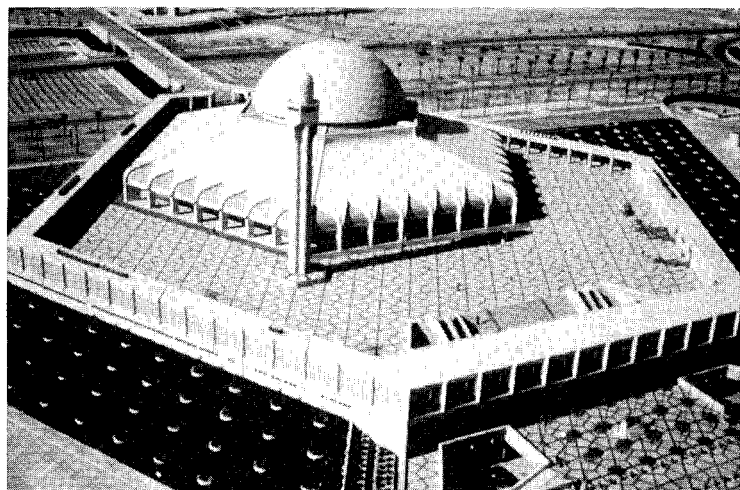
The consequences of this shift of power are particularly evident in the modern-day urban setting. In the past, the mosque was almost without exception an integrated element in the urban fabric, central to the community it served. This is still true of older urban settings where the relationship has already been established and of new urban settlements where traditional models are sometimes repeated. However, in many Islamic cities, the problem of the growing city which has led to the creation of new urban settlements has incited governments to make site decisions based exclusively on zoning considerations, that is, to create a number of “strategically located” Friday mosques which are not usually integrated into the community that they serve. The result is that these mosques become separated from the neighbourhood, thus leading to a breakdown in the inhabitants’ physical relationship with their mosque.



*The King Khaled International Airport Mosque in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, is a perfect example of a centrally conceived mosque commissioned by an institutional body, in this case the Airport Development Authority.*

*Architects: Helmut, Obata and Kasselbaum*

*Photograph: Courtesy of the architects*





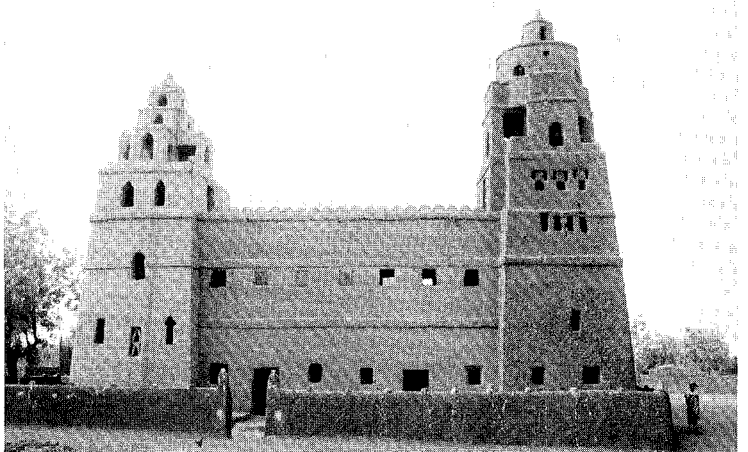
*The Central Mosque of Porto Novo, Benin, begun in 1912 by African repatriates from South America, uses an imported vernacular style reminiscent of Brazilian baroque church architecture known as the Afro-Brazilian style.*  
*Photograph: C. Benedetti*

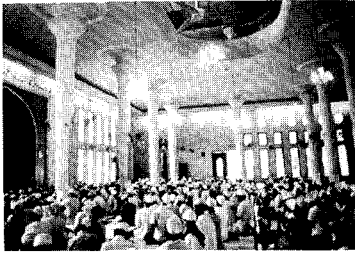


Another development which has been expressed in a shift from particularism in the built environment towards universalism is the appearance of a pan-Islamic style. As a result of pressures to become more “normative”, as well as a conscious desire on the part of Muslim communities to be seen as being Muslim, the use of clearly identifiable, universally “Islamic” elements such as the minaret and dome is becoming ever more frequent in modern-day mosque architecture. The pan-Islamic style has had a significant impact on the entire Islamic world, but especially in regions such as Southeast Asia where it has almost completely supplanted traditional architectural styles in both urban and rural societies. An illustration of this tendency can be found in Indonesia where take-home prefabricated tin domes, which can be bought at roadside stands, have had an overwhelming success.

**Individual patrons** have always played an important part in the building of mosques. Individuals usually build mosques as a sign

*Winner of an Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1986, the Yaama Mosque in Niger was constructed in several stages by the community led by the master mason. It displays the vernacular building tradition of Africa using local mud brick techniques.*  
*Master Mason: Falké Barmou*  
*Photograph: K. Adle/AKAA*





*Baitul Mukarram was conceived as a central mosque for the city of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Built by the local community, it takes the historical model of the Kaaba in Mecca as its formal reference. Architect: A.H. Thariani  
Photograph: S. Noorani*



of their piety or as a gesture towards their own community. Such mosques usually reflect the taste of their patrons, such as the eclectic Indian mosque complex built by the landowner Sardar Rais in Bhong, Pakistan. Often a ruler would erect a mosque in a foreign land as a reminder of his presence and his own faith. This can be seen in countless examples in India and Indonesia. In recent times the international nature of the elite has led to the individual making a gesture not only to his own community but to others as well — for example, several Saudi Arabian princes have built mosques in Pakistan, Morocco, and Spain. The patron is of necessity economically well-off but the range is enormous: from the King of Morocco to a businessman in Bangladesh. Here, I do not plan to elaborate on the question of individual as client but raise it as a continually important force in mosque-building.

**Communities “abroad”** constitute the other new client type (other than the State). They consist of people who live in societies that

*The Sherefudin White Mosque in Visoko, Yugoslavia, winner of an Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1983, was built by the Muslim community of Visoko. The building illustrates the modernist approach to mosque building. Architect: Zlatko Ugljen  
Photograph: J. Bétant/AKAA*



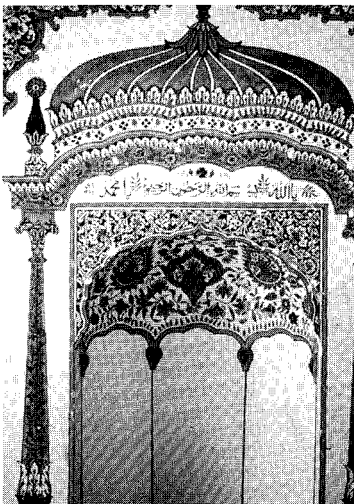
*In Indonesia, prefabricated tin domes which can be bought at road stands have enjoyed enormous popularity. Such domes replace the traditional roof as a signal of a mosque's presence and are perceived as relating to the Middle Eastern Arab architecture of Islam's origins.*

*Photograph: S. Özkan*



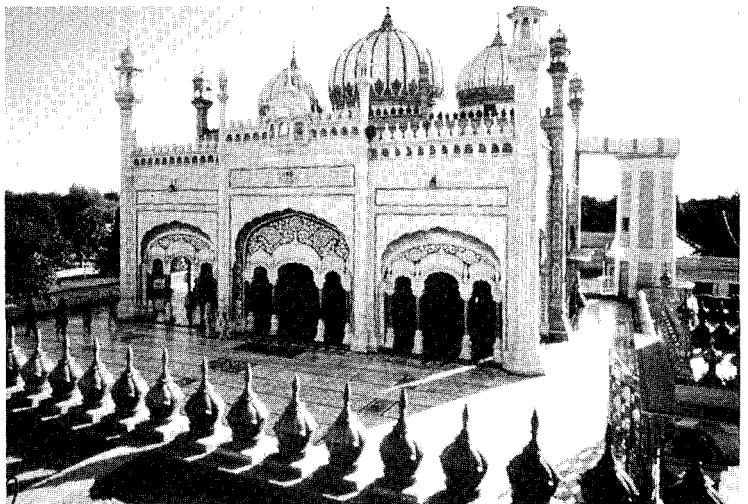
*Entirely conceived, financed and built by its patron, Rais Ghazi Mohammad, the Bhong Village Mosque represents a popular eclectic vernacular style common in the north of the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent. This recipient of an Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1986 uses profuse decoration and a liberal juxtaposition of materials (below and right). As such, it represents perhaps a true ars vulgaris.*

*Architect: Rais Ghazi Mohammad  
Photographs: J. Bétant/AKAA*



are predominantly non-Muslim and belong to cultures other than their own. With the globalization of culture and movement of people, this category of client has become an important one. This is true of the Dar al-Islam Mosque in New Mexico, designed by Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy in a traditional Nubian architectural idiom, which serves as a landmark for a Muslim minority in the United States, and of the mosque in Plainfield, Indiana, designed by Gulzar Haider.

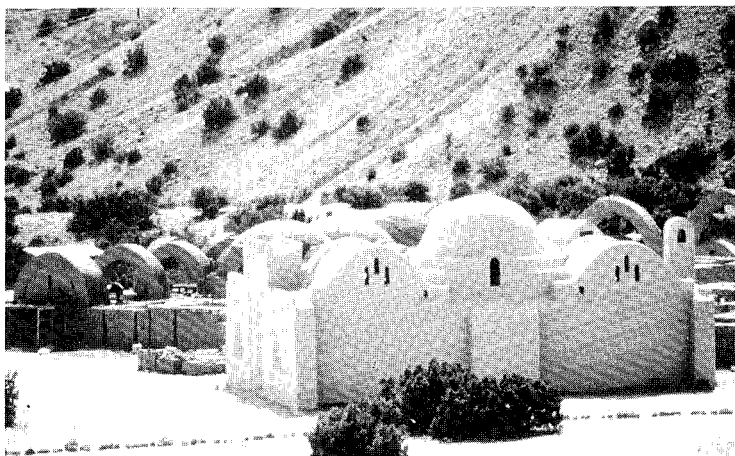
This discussion, however, of mosques built by immigrant communities abroad focuses on mosques built or perceived as statements of Muslim presence in the West, which can be distinguished from mosques that are built by communities for their own everyday use. In new urban and rural settings, particularly in the case of a Muslim community in a non-Muslim country or surrounded by other religious groups, the mosque is a very important



*The Dar al-Islam Mosque near Abiquiu, New Mexico, is part of the planned village designed for a Muslim arts and crafts community in the United States as a continuation of the New Gournia experiment.*

*Architect: Hassan Fathy*

*Photograph: Cradoc Bagshaw/Dar al-Islam*



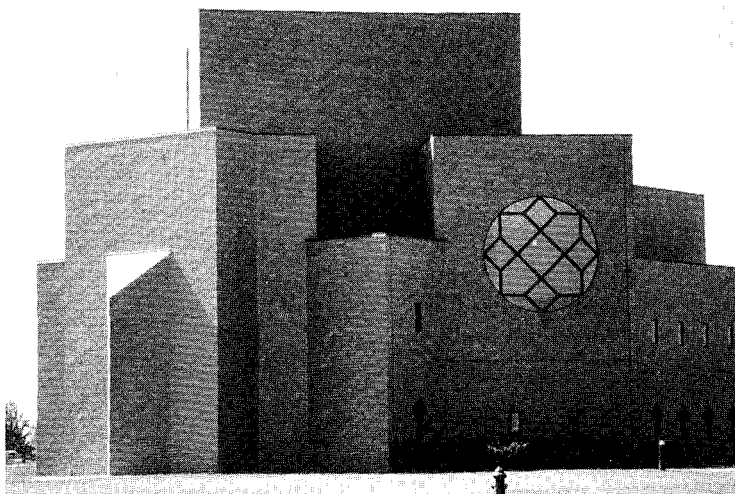
collective sign of the community's presence, and usually the first public building to be erected. This is true in most large cities in the West such as London, Washington, or Paris where the mosque or Islamic centre functions as a point of reference for Muslims in the city and as a symbol of Islam. These buildings are usually financed by groups of Muslims of different origins and backgrounds. They also serve as indicators of the role in which immigrant groups see themselves within a foreign cultural context.

Projects for mosques expressing Muslim presence in non-Muslim countries basically started to take shape in the 1950s, which coincided with the end of colonialist rule and the rise of the independent states of the Islamic world. The colonial connections between countries like England, India, France, and North Africa remained noticeable. Early mosques included one in Woking, Surrey — a version of the Taj Mahal — founded in 1889 by Shah Jehan Begum, the wife of

*The mosque designed for the headquarters of the Islamic Society of North America in Plainfield, Indiana, is a modern image of an Islamic spirit.*

*Architect: Gulzar Haider*

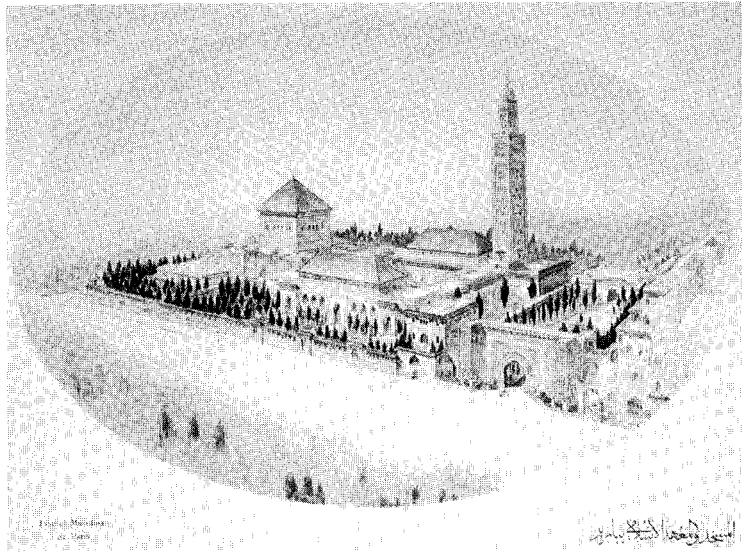
*Photograph: Courtesy of the architect*



*The Paris Mosque is part of an Islamic multipurpose institute built by the French government in the 1920s as a gesture to the North African Muslims for their services during World War I. The complex with its courtyards, minaret and green-tiled roofs was inspired by North African Moroccan architecture.*

*Architect: Maurice Montour*

*Photograph: Architect's drawing*

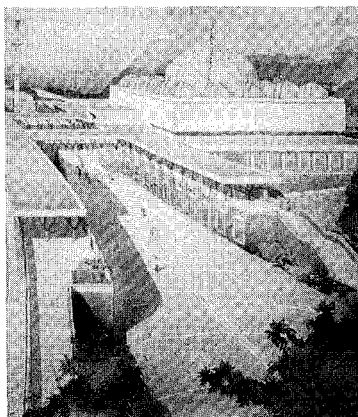


the then Nawab of Bhopal. It displays its Indian connections just as the Paris Mosque built in the 1930s was inspired by North African Moroccan architecture.

During the 1950s and 1960s significant numbers of Muslims began emigrating to England, France, and other parts of Europe as well as North America. By the 1960s the burgeoning immigrant communities began to feel the desire to express their presence by articulating new mosques. Projects that had been initiated in the 1950s like the Islamic Centre in Hamburg, built between 1960 and 1973 and funded jointly by the Iranian community in Germany and religious institutions in Iran, were finally seeing the light of day. With the rise of nationalism came also a growing sense of Muslim identity, which began to be expressed at that time in a large number of mosques being built by governments as symbols of Islamic nationhood — King Faisal Mosque in Islamabad, Masjid Negara in Kuala Lumpur, and Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta, to name a few.

Like their counterparts in Muslim countries, mosques in the West built as statements of Muslim identity are usually financed either entirely or in part by Muslim governments, particularly those in the Arab world, which have been responsible for financing more mosques outside of their boundaries than any other Muslim group. Very often, the prime movers in such projects are members of Muslim diplomatic missions who use their position and influence to get the necessary funds to build a mosque from their own and other Islamic governments.

Mosques built in foreign cultural settings are characterized by two tendencies: firstly, the design is tempered by the local context, modified by pressures from the local community or by local regulations and laws; and secondly, the design makes references to



*The Mosque of the Islamic Centre in Rome expresses monumentality and a sense of tranquillity. Its contemporary classic design was inspired by an eclectic set of references to mirror the diversity of origins of the Muslim population it serves.*

*Architects: Portoghesi, Moussawi and Gigliotti*

*Photographs: Courtesy of P. Portoghesi*



regional traditions. In the latter case, the external architectural form is usually influenced by one dominant style from one country or region, depending on who is financing, designing, or leading the project. In this sense, the design reflects the self-identity and aspirations of the group that takes the initiative in the project. The internal layout or plan generally follows the external architecture. However, the interior ornamentation is quite frequently inspired by a potpourri of styles that often have no direct connection with the formal expression. While the outside must fit into a non-Muslim cultural context, the inside is exuberantly decorated with Islamic ornamentation as if to emphasize that space as Muslim. Good examples of such buildings are the Islamic Centre in Washington, D.C.; the Regent's Park Mosque in London; and the recently built mosque in Rome by Paolo Portoghesi, Sami Moussawi, and V. Gigliotti.

In this century, the convergence of tradition and modernity in the Islamic world has provoked a wide-ranging debate on the essence of Islamic design. This, in turn, has led to a global reassessment of the Islamic heritage and culture, and the question: what constitutes Islamic design? The mosque, as the most important architectural representation of Muslim identity, has come to centre stage.

By taking concrete examples of various mosques from different parts of the world to illustrate the directions which mosque design has taken in the last forty years or so, I hope to indicate the different currents present in mosque design today. They range from government-sponsored and institutional mosques to those individually and community funded. Examples representing the mosque in the West give us insight into Muslim perceptions of their role in the international community.

Architecturally, mosques built in the past forty years may be divided into basically four categories as follows:<sup>4</sup>

- Vernacular — in which the buildings are defined by a traditional architectural language that is still used today.
- Historicist — models which refer back to specific historical styles as the source on which designs are based. Some of the mosques refer to more than one such style and are presented as a mixture of styles.
- Contemporary Classic — which in a Western interpretation would have been called post-modern classicism by writers such as William Curtis. This approach makes reference to the historical styles that are generally regarded as “classical” in Islam but presents a self-conscious search for original reinterpretations of these models. In some cases this leads to an eclecticism and in some, an interesting synthesis.
- Modern — in which originality and dealing with the twentieth century become the overriding concerns. Design, image, and technology point to a break with the past to portray the modern Muslim. Often this is the domain of the formally trained architect (in the Western sense) and the educated client. Progress is the key word.

The design vocabulary raises a number of issues when considered under the four categories of style — the difficulties of this kind of classification are apparent but still serve a useful function as an analytic tool.

Ismail Serageldin in a recent essay outlined some major issues that in regard to buildings in Islam need reflection.<sup>5</sup> I draw upon these in order to understand better both process and product. The first two deal with the stewardship of the earth and the relationship to nature. Both address attitudes towards the environment and in this instance towards the built environment of settlements and cities. This raises questions of how Muslims relate to society in general, what value systems are implicit in the relationships, and what image they want to project. In building terms one can discern two major trends — within a country that has a predominantly Muslim population the references are very often Ottoman, taking their cue from the modern state that came into being with Atatürk. This is tempered by considerations of nationalism and modern technology. For Muslims in non-Islamic countries, the images of recurring historical and regional references are usually Egyptian, Moroccan, Turkish, Iranian, and Indian.

Serageldin's third issue considers the relationship among people, and the expression of community — reflected in the relationship to buildings. The mosque in this instance is seen as an integral expression of communal gathering and prayer. The issues raised here address the question of how Muslims see their role within the society in which they live. The aspirations of different groups are expressed in various ways. For instance, the idea of the Arab-Islamic homeland often equates Muslim with Arab, especially outside the Arab nation states. In recent times this has, as we know, manifested

itself well beyond the question of identity to that of politics — the Arab-American dichotomy being one such manifestation. Interestingly, this alternative system of values was equally dramatically illustrated in Iran some ten years ago. Currently, Muslims in Southeast Asia also seem to be confronting these issues, although not in such dramatic ways. In the U.S.A. itself the minority Afro-American Muslims are struggling with the same problem.

In the architecture of Islam, this confrontation within communities begins to take the form of the home base or of the predominant cultural group. Immigrant groups seem to follow the same process. However, the situation becomes less clear when a number of groups collectively try to establish their identity through a single building complex. The often eclectic solutions are only occasionally innovative.

The last issue that Serageldin raises is that of individual behaviour, which I would translate as the way in which a particular building is used. In the case of the mosque, the question of how Muslims relate to each other is essentially not addressed. The act of collective prayer assumes a character of its own where the self is “left outside” and sublimated to the act of community.

To these issues I should like to add some historical considerations. The question of mosque as “sacred” space is open to discussion. Unlike Buddhism or Christianity, the notion of sacred space did not exist in Islam. The individual can pray anywhere, as can a group. What is prescribed is the ritual: the need for a clean surface and the acknowledgement of a physical direction. As collective prayer existed from the time of the Prophet, which was performed in the courtyard of his house, the space for congregation became more formalized. In some *tariqas*, or ways of Islamic belief, such as Sufism and other traditions that leaned towards mysticism and meditation, the space appears to have also become defined in terms of atmosphere and used as the symbolic heart of community. This has led to what one might perceive as the “sacralization” of space.

It may be extrapolated that owing to the secular/sacred integration in Islam, the place of prayer never stood alone but was complemented by other spaces that dealt with general societal interactions. Hence the mosque was usually integrated into the built fabric and was part of the social milieu. As part of the community, it provided spaces for functional facilities around it, such as hospitals, madrasahs, and even bazaars. The emergence of the mosque as a statement of power divorced from its physical context was limited to special cases until the emergence of the modern Islamic state where it has become a statement of identity isolated as a distinct building type — an identity that carries over to its presence in other cultures today.

In the modern world the mosque, more than any other building type of Islam, signals the values of both client groups and society, and the manifestations of change are more apparent in the mosque than in most other building types.



Lastly, the mosque has always been the structure in which both patrons and architects have made the strongest design and technological statement — a trend which today has become even more pronounced. Mosque design takes on the persona and aspirations of the dominant group, which can in practice be quite small. In following the case studies of a wide range of buildings, Renata Holod and I were fascinated by how just a few decision-makers and designers have influenced so much. For example, the committees that decided on most of the state mosques, or the juries that judged design competitions, consisted of five to fifteen people. The mosques subsequently produced became models which were often copied (with variations) many times over. The diffusion of their ideas and their impact even on remote rural situations are acutely felt.

The central role of the contemporary mosque as a clue to understanding the aspirations and needs of Muslim societies cannot be denied. In its mutation and adaptation to change, it has reflected the inherently inclusive nature of Islam rather than what is often portrayed, especially in Western media, as the exclusive nature of the faith. It may not be much of an exaggeration to say that to recognize the dynamics of design in the mosque is to begin to understand changes that are occurring in Muslim societies today.

Finally, let me offer a model of the mosque which is both contemporary and timeless: whether the mosque lies within a complex of buildings, whether it is an isolated monument or just a space in the home, the place of prayer does not stand alone — it is an integrated whole in which the act of ritual prayer is complemented by other activities that relate to the community. It is a sense of public space which is a reflector to all Muslims and the world at large that reconfirms the humanistic and holistic values of Islam.

## Notes

1. This paper quotes freely from a forthcoming book on contemporary mosques by Renata Holod and Hasan-Uddin Khan. However, some of the views expressed herein are my own and cannot be attributed to the joint monograph.
2. The masjid being seen as a mosque for daily prayer or built especially for members of a tribe, sect, profession, or other exclusively defined communities, whereas the jami is essentially seen as the mosque for congregational Friday prayer.
3. Although town planning legislation, which divided the city into functional zones and hierarchies, was essentially a Western colonial legacy, local governments still use it in spite of the fact that it is often inapplicable either culturally or climatically in much of the Islamic world.
4. A simpler classification of the mosque has been suggested by Oleg Grabar into “traditional and modern”, and by Mohammad al-Asad in Chapter 1 of this volume. But I feel that my wider classification permits greater nuances and understanding of design from an architectural critic’s point of view.
5. Ismail Serageldin, “Faith and Environment”, in *Space for Freedom* (London: Butterworth Architecture, 1989).

## Comments

*Dogan Kuban*

In the first part of my presentation I will underline and discuss the main points of Hasan-Uddin Khan's paper. In the second part, I will offer my own ideas on the development of mosque design in the modern period to which I have contributed as a young designer since the early fifties.

Hasan-Uddin Khan's paper deals with the typology and forms of contemporary mosques which he has developed with Renata Holod. Their basic observations can be summed up as follows:

- Although greatly diversified by their form, contemporary mosques are still central public ritual spaces.
- In recent years they have become nodal points in the organization of public space or building complexes.
- In most cases they are formally connected with past models: imitation or interpretation.

These observations are correct. The second point is more specific for some Arab countries but because of the growing sense of the specificity of the Muslim culture, it attracts more and more attention in public space design.

Hasan Khan affirms that sacralization of the space of the mosque proper comes with the isolation of its main function, i.e., from a multipurpose space to a space for prayer. But I wonder whether "sacralization" is the correct word. Unfortunately I am afraid it is more "profanation" of the religious spirit. For Muslims, the mosque may become a sacred object if treated adversely by non-Muslims, but I believe that it is un-Islamic to confer a certain holiness on any artifact.

The mosque in the everyday life of the Muslims is a place of common prayer. People treat it as they treat their house, and this is the best tradition in the way of the Prophet. This is the most beautiful part of the mosque in the Islamic community. All added significance to it has much to do with state politics.

The Umayyad Caliph who destroyed the Prophet's house, against the protests of the people of Medina, and built a larger new mosque instead, did not do it out of disrespect for the Prophet, but rather for the glorification of both the state and himself. Since that time, that practice has prevailed, except for the lesser masjids built by the community or by private individuals for charity.

The history of the mosque has to be considered with this political bias in mind. Although we cannot doubt the sincerity of Muslim rulers, from a purely religious and spiritual point of view, it remains that insignificant masjids or great musallas with simple *minbars* and *mihirabs* are more intimately related to the devotional practice of the common people. The great mosques with eminent forms are symbols of their time, more important for their cultural and aesthetic significance, but I cannot accept them as pure expressions of faith.

Hasan Khan speaks of a rupture of symbolic language in the design of mosques. I would recall only that the history of mosque architecture offers a number of instances in which radical rupture

of formal and connected symbolic language has occurred, such as between the early Islamic and later Iranian mosques, the Seljuk and Ottoman mosques in Anatolia, and finally between the Irano-Central Asian tradition and later regional variations in the Indian subcontinent.

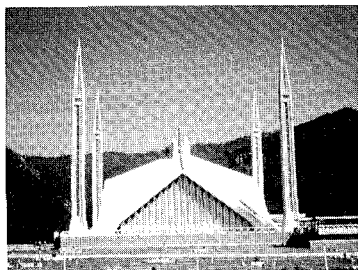
Another remark on the ideology as a primary factor of this rupture of symbolic forms: secularism should not be seen as the agent of destruction of the traditional mosque design. Indeed, in secular Turkey, we are building mosques almost unequivocally traditional, mostly hopeless imitations. Whether built by individuals or by public agencies, the decisive factor is the cultural image or cultural policy of the client or the power-holder.

The idea of a state mosque is part of the scheme of legalization of the political power by referring to Islamic symbols. In recent Islam, only Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, veered away from this politicization of the religious symbols.

Hasan-Uddin Khan discussed in detail the mechanisms of building mosques. His observations are essentially correct. But I should underline that this does not apply to the Turkish situation. In Turkey we build more mosques maybe than any other Muslim country, but they are built by the community.

I must point out again that the separation of functions which were combined in the early mosques is not the legacy of Westernization. It is a practice that already existed in fifteenth-century Turkey. We may perhaps observe that the Ottoman Empire was the most Westernized of the Islamic states.

I would also like to insist that placing the mosque in the centre of the city, or a complex, is a symbolic act but it is not functional. It does not mean that the mosque becomes central in our everyday life. Some radicals may believe that by doing so, it will, but this is a mistaken emphasis. And it has its dangers for the symbolism of the mosque itself. Because great business skyscrapers, great hotels, shopping malls tend to take away the formal dominance from mosques, one must place more emphasis on quality and genuine feeling rather than on dimensions. I think the present approach, which is totally political, must be reconsidered in favour of one emphasizing a healthier design. It is correct to observe that with modern planning the organic relationship between the mosque and the urban fabric has been lost. Except for the hypostyle Arab mosque surrounded by shops and houses and intimately integrated with the urban fabric, the great imperial mosques of later Islam, with their large courtyards, imposing domes, and monumental iwans were already in dialectical contrast with their flat surroundings. In fact, even with the Abbasids, in the building of great mosques political expediency had a primordial role. In that period of blissful simplicity the mosque could dominate the landscape: a medieval feature. This old image should be forgotten; it is not repeatable.



*The King Faisal Mosque in Islamabad, Pakistan, resulted from a competition open exclusively to Muslim architects. The objective was a mosque that would express the modern aspirations of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The mosque, designed by Vedat Dalokay of Turkey, can accommodate 7500 people under a tent-like structure with four Ottoman minarets. The implementation of the design was considered a technological feat. Photograph: Courtesy of the architect*

Hasan Khan's emphasis on Southeast Asia concerning the pan-Islamic character of mosque design has its virtue. But this idea of pan-Islamic design is more an intellectual rather than a practical aspect of mosque architecture. Despite the discourse on the Islamic *ummah*, mosque design remains essentially regional. Even in the colonial period regional traditions prevailed. Actually, strong regionalism of mosque design, in all periods of history and in all countries (China, Indonesia, India, Iran, Turkey, Arab countries), indicates that the form of a mosque is not decided by "Islam" as such. Muslims converted any space for their religious use. It is like converting people to Islam.

The forms become symbolic by long usage. But this long usage indicates that there is an underlying quality which made them survive. This quality should be an aesthetic one. As such, the shapes of mosques in our history negate the term "Islamic design".

Hasan-Uddin Khan presents a classification of contemporary design approaches. The style (or approach) is a complex phenomenon:

- It may be dictated (political ideology).
- It may be suggested (cultural ideology).
- It may be borrowed (cultural ideology or image status).
- It may be created (only in self-sufficient and original phases of culture).

Today historicism is prevalent. Although the idea of individual creation is valid, its flexibility is limited within the attitudes of contemporary historicist culture of Islamic societies. Despite the urge to an Islamic ecumenism, this historicism is fiercely nationalistic in the majority of cases.

The most important parameter, as stated, is technology and a technological society. But we cannot say that modern technology has yet influenced mosque design. The closest example may be that of Dalokay in Islamabad. Great domes in ferro-concrete are not what we intend to say. Even a superficial observation of contemporary mosques indicates that changes in the social structure barely affect the form of mosques. There are always dominant social groups who impose the use of established models.

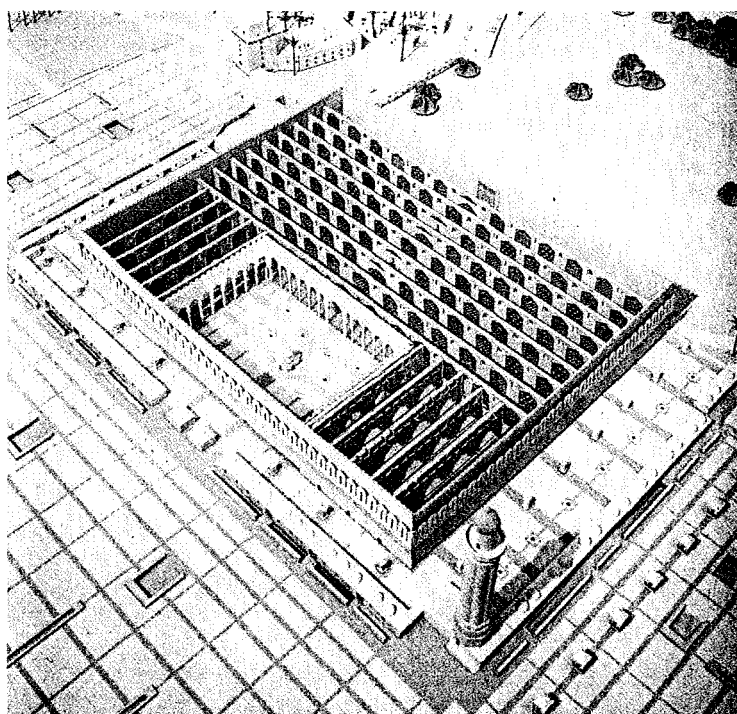
Hasan Khan has discussed the idea of sacred space, and I understand that he emphasizes more multifunctionality rather than sacrality. Whether the mosque would reach its former pre-eminence in the Islamic cityscape is a moot question. For my part I think it is very doubtful. But I believe — notwithstanding Mohammed Arkoun's remarks on the search for new symbols — that a mosque built by the community still remains the most genuine expression of contemporary Islam in this society; it reflects its biases, cultural standards, and aesthetic sensibility. The intervention of political decision-makers in this process changes this direct relationship between culture and architectural form. Thus a project by Bofill or Venturi for the Baghdad State Mosque is not a genuine expression of contemporary Iraqi society. It is a politico-cultural gesture of

the ruler. In fact the whole process has been rightly cancelled. This seems inevitable. As in the past, no genuine design could be expected from the present situation of Muslim societies, owing to populism and disturbing politicization.

In the second part of my discussion I would like to present other thoughts on mosque design.

Looking at mosque designs, we recognize two basic attitudes: new design (only by radical architects and very rare) and design with traditional vocabulary (common public demand).

Among architects only a minority believe in a totally new design. The reason for the use of traditional vocabulary, as stated in the seminar notes sent to participants, is "to create emotionally and spiritually charged visual and spatial effects". Similar statements have been discussed by a great number of architects and critics. But we should not accept this statement literally without questioning its premises. If traditional architectural vocabulary is charged with symbolism which is sought by the public at large, why is this only specified for the mosque and not for dwellings? Does it mean that there is a dichotomy between feelings for the house and the feelings for the mosque? Does this dichotomy exist between religion and everyday life? Or does it mean that the symbolism of the traditional mosque form stems from the trans-individual sphere, while the form of the house stems from the individual sphere of life?



*Axonometric view seen without roof and domes of Robert Venturi's design for the Baghdad State Mosque competition. Photograph: Mimar 11, 1984*

If there is a dichotomy between the characteristics of the mosque and other buildings, we must then postulate that ideas about modern architectural forms cannot be applied to mosque design, or vice versa. Ideas concerning the forms of the mosque are not relevant for other building programmes. This first point needs further elaboration.

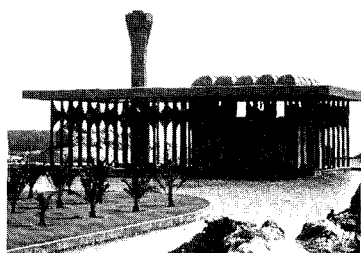
If a skyscraper or a modern building can easily replace traditional buildings by its status and its aesthetic approach — thus creating an emotional if not a spiritual appeal — why can't a modern mosque have the same effect? In a museum, in an old building, or in any memorable form, if there is a poetic appeal, spirituality can be experienced as in a mosque. I believe that to assign certain psychological qualities to mosques or other artifacts is a rationalization which has less to do with architecture than with religious dogma or nationalistic fervour.

I would like to add a few remarks on modernity and tradition. History informs us that the Muslims created mosques of different forms. In each period and in each region there are highly original concepts of space. How did tradition affect the design of ancient mosques? This is well known. The early mosque forms were borrowed from the pre-Islamic cultures and were adopted to Islamic requirements and eventually Muslims developed their own style. The modern period, however, does not need to borrow from extra-Islamic sources. But can we produce new forms for our mosques or is this effort superfluous? Some may say that it is so, since the mosque is no longer the centre of social life. But radical opinion is different: as it considers the mosque as the centre of everything, at this point we have to confess that this is not a design problem. But if such a radical view would dominate the political life, I believe that it should demand new forms for self-esteem in a Muslim world. To stick to old forms is a clear confession that Muslims are unable to create, to renew, and therefore to survive. Their old material order will be unable to defend itself against the onslaught of a Western system.

Evidently we can discuss problems of preferences, the place of the traditional forms, regional or universal Muslim backgrounds, or innovation versus modernity, but with the provision that the foregoing remarks should not be forgotten.

The use of traditional forms or patterns is directly related to the demands of the clients and of society at large. The preference for traditional forms in mosques is the expression of radical Islam's attachment to tradition and the surviving symbolical value of the old forms. Whether this is a sign of healthy regeneration is a problem for extra-architectural discourse.

In contemporary mosque design it is common to follow an old model. Through the use of known patterns and motifs, a straight copy or a modified one is obtained: domes, arches, courtyards, minarets, *musharabiyyas*, *muqarnas*, etc.



*The small Mosque of the University of Petroleum and Minerals, in Dhahran, was begun in 1963. The architects Caudill, Rowlett and Scott designed a building based on a traditional mosque plan yet departing from tradition in its exterior design.*  
*Photograph: Courtesy of the architects*

In most cases architects follow the directions set forth by the client. Recently I participated in a limited private competition for the Great Mosque at Abu Dhabi. In the brief the final mosque was already succinctly described showing the desire of the client for an Indo-Muslim model. We abided by the brief's main image and we presented an eclectic, simplified, and stylized interpretation of an Indo-Muslim mosque. We won third prize.

The only reasonable defence for this conservative attitude may be formulated as follows: history presents a great number of solutions which have never been exploited to their full potential. There are still possibilities for developing ancient themes. Their aesthetic appeal has not necessarily been exhausted, and they are moreover charged with the symbolism of the past, as well as religious significance. In a mosque, this concentration of memories, feelings, and emotions is a considerable asset for the final impact of the building on the beholders. Thus the use of traditional patterns has its valid rationality. In this approach one may exclude or allow direct imitation.

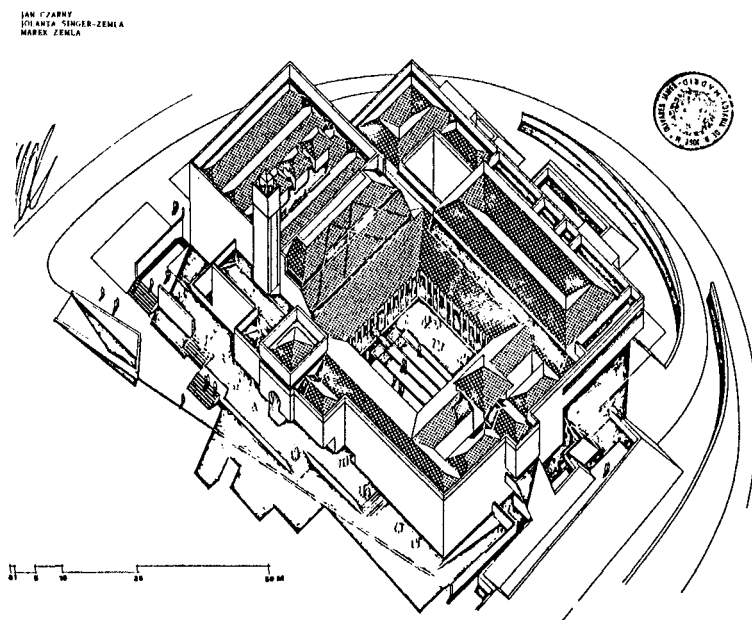
These kinds of design experiences may eventually reach a stage of experimentation in which new forms could earn acceptability. That the new is acceptable by common people is seen in the case of the Great Mosque of Islamabad, the University Mosque at Dhahran, and many small modern masjids in various Muslim countries. But under the influence of resurgent radicalism in Islam, the imitative approach is more pronounced today. For dogmatists, the old models are interpreted as a sort of *sunna* to follow. But we know that the historical models did not follow the Prophet's mosque, the true *sunna*.

I would like to add two more comments on the themes of regional versus universal and innovation versus contemporary. In terms of the regional versus universal, the demand for a universal Muslim background corresponds, theoretically, to the Islamic *ummah*. The totality of Muslim historical experience may be taken as reference for modern design. This approach may be accepted by non-Muslim architects working for Muslim clients because as outsiders they see Islam as a whole — they learn Islamic architecture from books.

But in practice this universalism is unacceptable if we argue that the traditional forms have significance because they represent continuity. Accordingly we cannot offer Indian models to the Turks. This would be alien to their experience and taste. Tens of thousands of new mosques built in Turkey attest to the regional background of their design. The competition for the Madrid Islamic Centre in which more than four hundred architects participated was won by projects consonant with Spanish tradition. Likewise, most of the participants in the competition for the Baghdad State Mosque sent interpretations of Abbasid mosques. Only on an intellectual platform, as in our case of the Abu Dhabi mosque, a more syncretic approach may be considered. On a conceptual framework, however, the



*The winning project in the "Islamic Cultural Centre for Madrid" competition was the one presented by Jan Czarny, Jolanta Singer-Zemla and Marek Zemla. Of the 455 submissions from almost 2000 architects, the jury awarded this project first prize as it came closest to fulfilling the objective of "making a meaningful contribution to the advancement of current expression of Spanish-Islamic architecture". See Jury's final report in Madrid Islamic Cultural Centre Competition, Union Internationale des Architectes, Paris, 1980.*



regional base is more relevant, and in actual practice constitutes the majority of cases.

Innovation versus contemporary: genuine contemporary design may be created if Muslim societies could have complete confidence in themselves, and would accept the modern world as it is. But this perspective seems very remote. Thus the only alternative that remains is innovation, or interpretation. It will be conditioned by the image of the past. This does not sound like a comforting perspective because it excludes creativity. On the other hand, even the greatest styles, in the last analysis, are interpretations of past experiences. Architectural history always confers a special and respected status to old models. Thus, outside of the theoretical approach, to accept the past as an unfinished thesis and to improvise on old themes is conceivable as a temporary guideline. But formulas, we should not offer.

A short remark on aesthetics: aesthetic quality is neutral and independent of style. Whatever form you adopt, you may or may not have it. This is the problem of taste rather than a cultural sign.

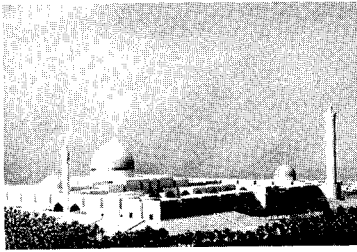
To conclude I want to say that the real strength of modern Islam will be expressed only when Muslim architects will feel free to build in whatever form they choose and that kind of architecture is not what has been shown here on the screen.

## Comments

*Rasem Badran\**

Using three different mosques I have designed for three different cultural milieux (in Baghdad, Doha, and Riyadh), I would like to emphasize four aspects of mosque architecture:

- The design of the mosque in the social context;
- Imagery and symbolism of mosque architecture;
- The design of the mosque as an act of innovation within the context of tradition and history;
- The mosque as a generator of spatial quality and meaning in the urban tissue.



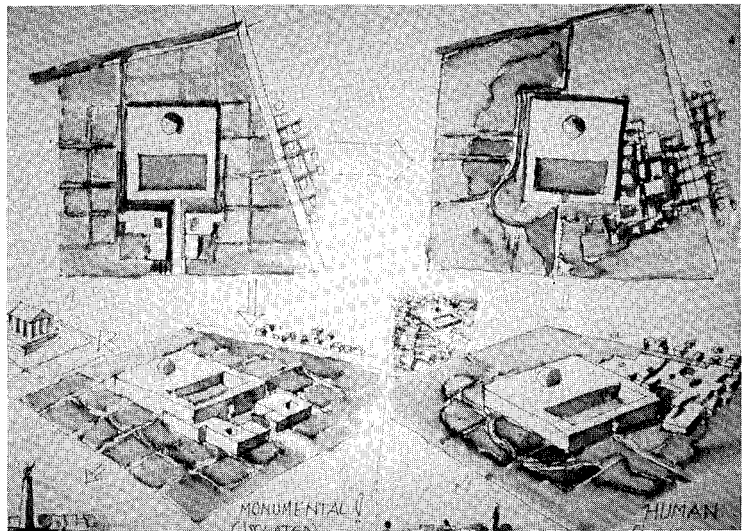
*The Baghdad State Mosque, model.*

### Reflections on the Design of the Mosque in the Social Context

The Baghdad State Mosque sponsored by the Iraqi government is a large-scale mosque which requires a large piece of land. The intention of the client, surely a political decision, was to create a monumental structure outside Baghdad. Since most of the large mosques in Islamic cities are in the heart of the city and fully integrated spatially and functionally within the urban fabric, our intention was to re-create this situation in the hope that the future expansion of Baghdad will give the mosque its appropriate environment. This humanizing process was achieved by creating a buffer zone between the mosque periphery and the surroundings, which are not yet populated or even completed with an urban fabric. This buffer zone will contain different functional facilities to provide for a balanced fulfilment of spiritual, physical, and mental needs of Muslims in an Islamic society.

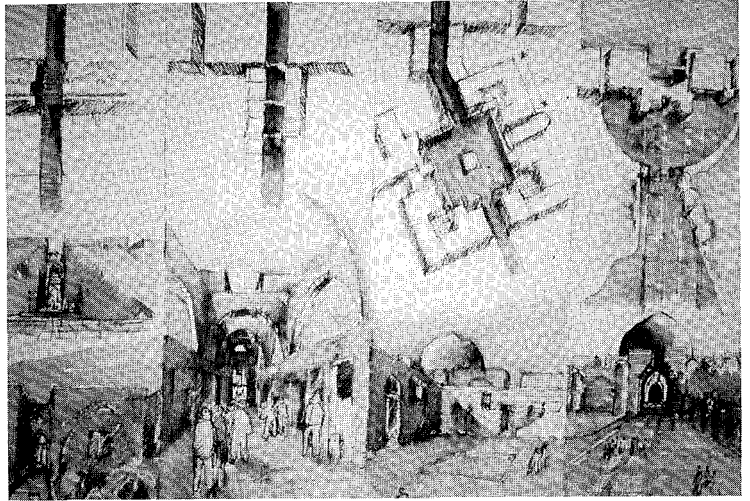
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\* This text is a composite of Mr. Badran's presentation and of his elaborations during the open discussion session.



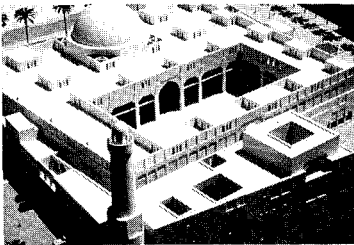
*Site study of the Baghdad State Mosque.*

*A buffer zone containing different functions is projected between the State Mosque and its periphery.*

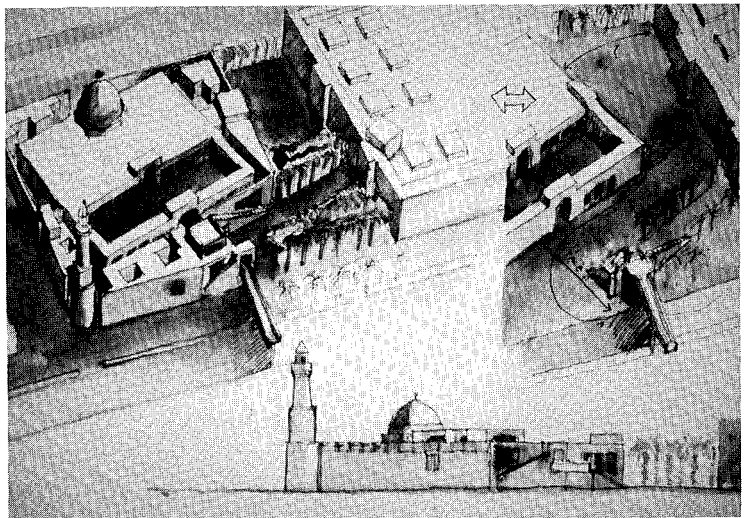


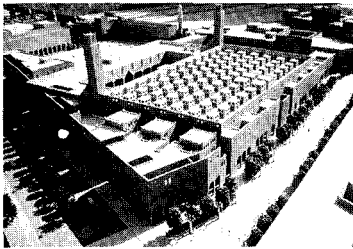
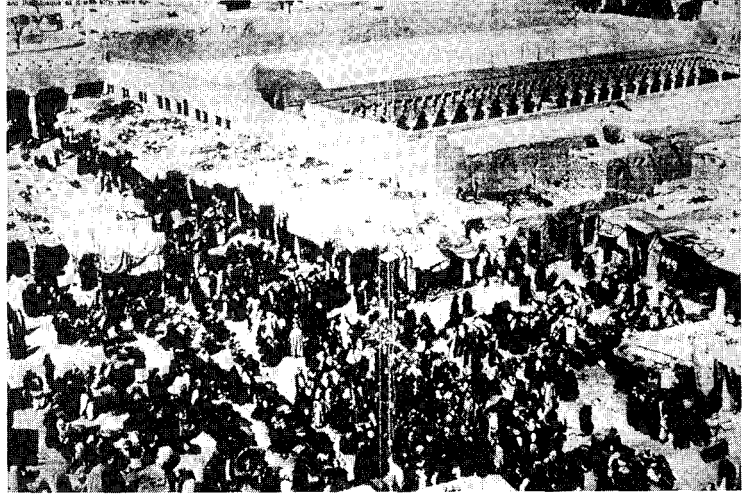
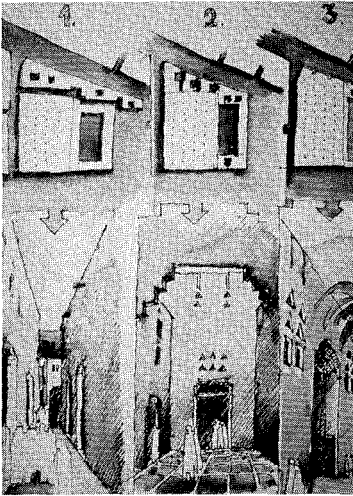
In a similar fashion, the design of the Doha Mosque (not yet built), takes into consideration the same issues but in a different way, the objective being to avoid the temple-like situation in order to avoid isolation. The Riyadh Mosque, on the other hand, in the very heart of the old city, replaces the old Qasr Alhukm Mosque. The client's intention is to emphasize the mosque along with the adjacent Justice Palace to make it a focal point for the city. It will, at the same time, be integrated into the surrounding urban and social fabric by the help of structures such as shops, public services, educational and administrative institutions.

I would say therefore that the objective is not to undertake surgical measures to superimpose what I call the humanizing process of mosques, such as adopting communal functions and facilitating the



*The design of the Doha Mosque (above) tries in a similar fashion to avoid a physical and social isolation (right).*





*The Riyadh Mosque (above) replacing the old Qasr Alhukm Mosque (top, right) will be integrated to the urban social fabric through commercial and public services (top).*

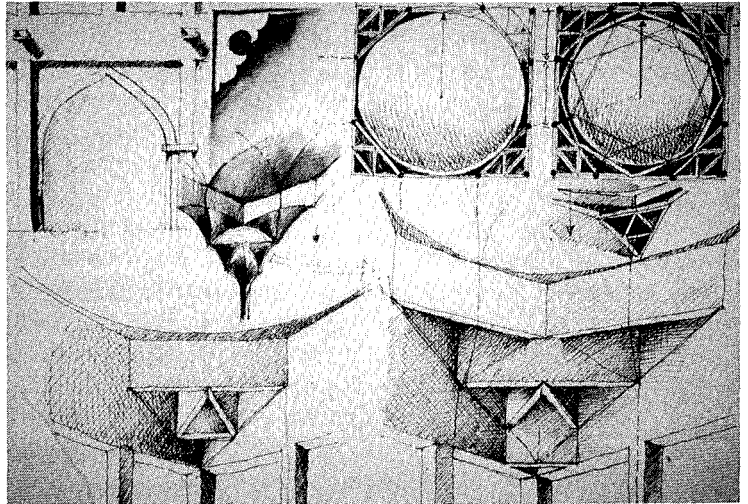
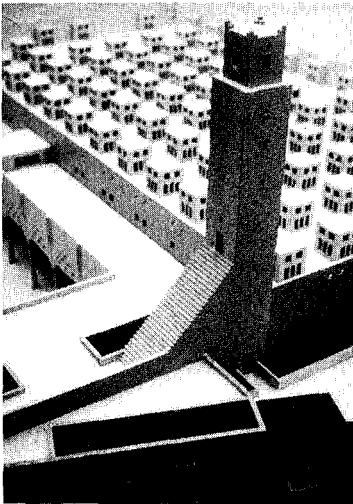
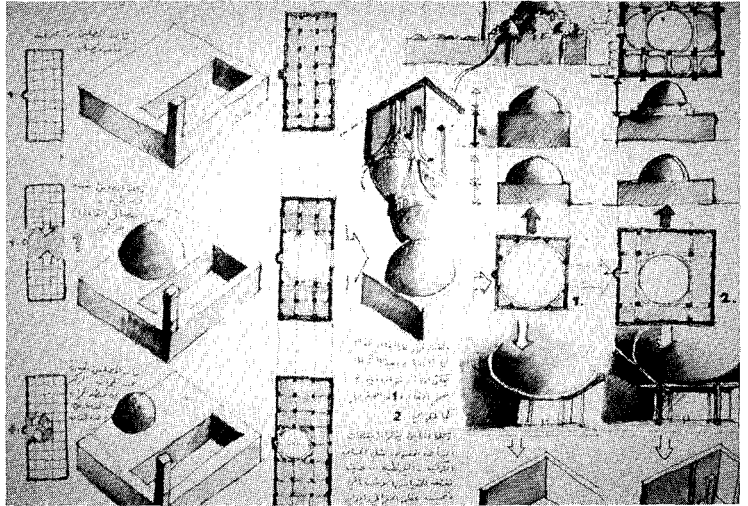
interaction between the mosque complex and its surroundings, but rather the mosque should be understood as a fulfilment of the socio-cultural and physical demands of Muslims in their own settlements. I disagree with the idea of searching for new models and concepts of “mosque buildings”; I would rather call for courageous steps by decision-makers and planners towards implanting mosques in the urban fabric of our towns.

### **Reflections on the Imagery and Symbolism of Mosque Architecture**

In this regard I will go through the typical elements of the dome, minarets, etc. In the Baghdad Mosque, the dome in particular represents a dialogue between the architect and the form with its functional, historical, and symbolic meanings. Functionally, it indicates the location of the *mihrab* through intensive natural lighting; symbolically, it may satisfy the onlooker; historically, it may give some identity to the object. Different attempts were made using one dome for the main prayer hall and a smaller one for the daily prayer space. The same happened with the minarets.

In the Doha Mosque, because of the scale of the mosque, the dome was depressed in order to allow for the *mihrab*. However, in the Justice Palace, the case was different because in this region domes are associated with tombs by the Wahabi sect. The dome was therefore not adopted in the design scheme and was replaced by small light towers in order to lighten the *mihrab* area. We designed two minarets to act as landmarks identifying the city centre and marking the direction towards Mecca.

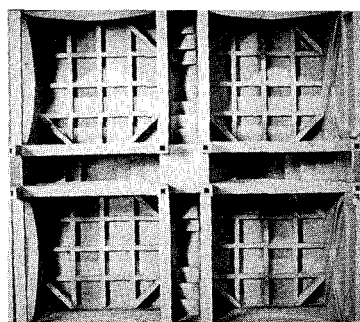
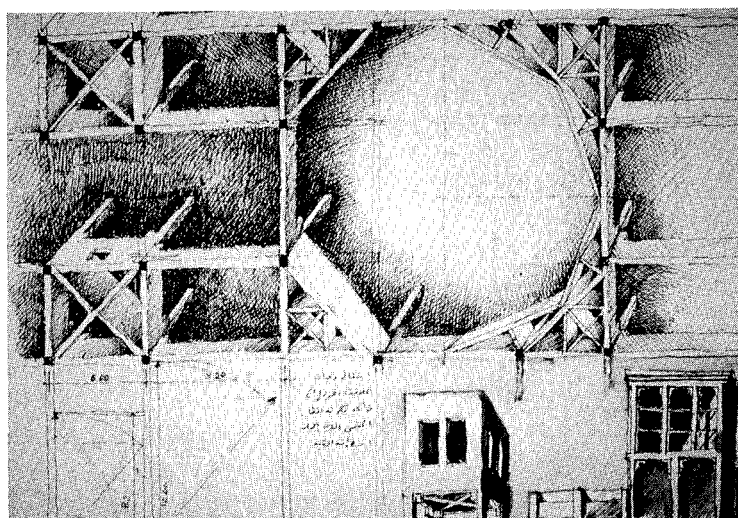
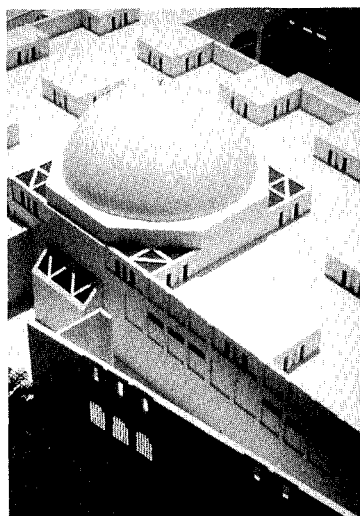
Here, I consider architecture as a cultural manifestation of a continuous dialogue between “constant” and “variable”, which leads



*Due to the scale of the Doha Mosque (top, left), its dome was depressed (top, right), to allow for a mihrab area (above, right). In the case of the Justice Palace Mosque (above, left) in Riyadh, the dome, usually associated with tombs in this area, was replaced by a light tower in order to lighten the mihrab area.*

to semiological references, solutions or references to social, environmental, and mental values that communicate with the essence and faith of the Muslim community.

Mosque buildings should not be reduced to a set of generalized rules but rather be seen as a never-ending evolutionary process of variables which we can conceive through a continuous dialogue of how and why. The dome, for example, has been used, reduced, or eliminated in the proposed mosque models of the Baghdad State Mosque, Doha Mosque, and Riyadh Mosque. Nevertheless, there is a common denominator between those schemes, which is the spatial organization of the entire product which obviously follows the rules of praying, which confirms the geometrical and architectural quality of the spatial arrangement that can be experienced instinctly by the



*In the Doha Mosque (top, left and right) the “windcatcher” is incorporated with the wall slit to allow proper air circulation. In the Baghdad State Mosque (above), the mechanical system is integrated within the structural system.*

worshippers. It provides the most effective lesson for mosque planners and architects.

### **The Design of the Mosque as an Act of Innovation within the Context of Tradition and History**

I consider tradition as a living norm in which the design process becomes an innovative act.

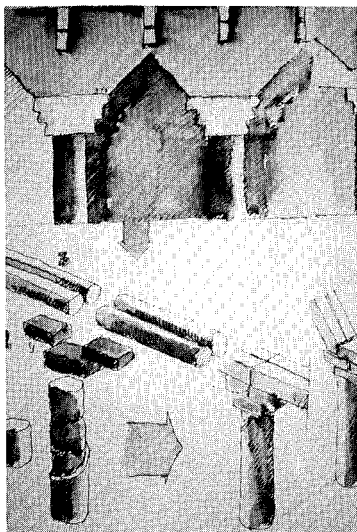
In the case of the Baghdad State Mosque, the mechanical system is integrated within the structural system; in the Doha Mosque, the “windcatcher” is incorporated with the wall slit which is required for proper air circulation and to house the air-conditioning system, and, in the Justice Palace Mosque, the structural system in the main prayer hall relies on prefabrication technology that resembles traditional methods of the past. We learn the act from history but we do not borrow the product.

The design of a mosque is an act of innovation within the context of tradition through which a mature perceptive approach to precedents will provide a rich environment for a dialectic discourse. One can visualize the moral and mental human innovative act through the decades, which prepares man for contemporary events.

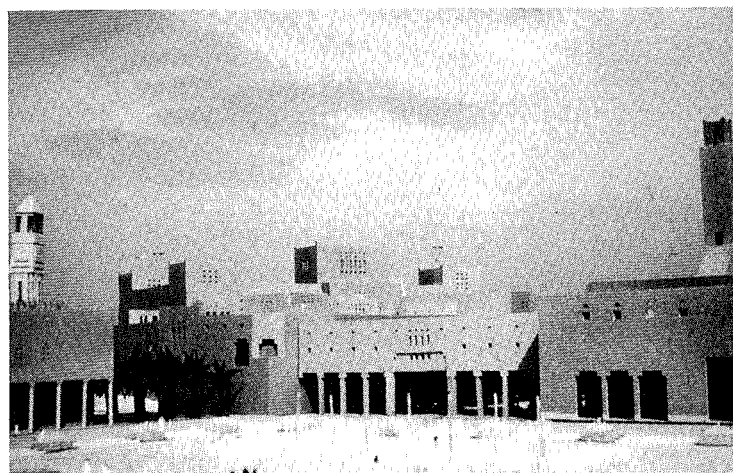
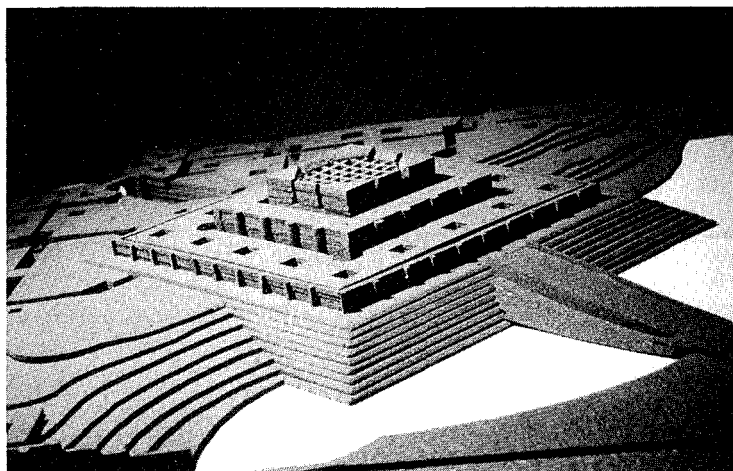
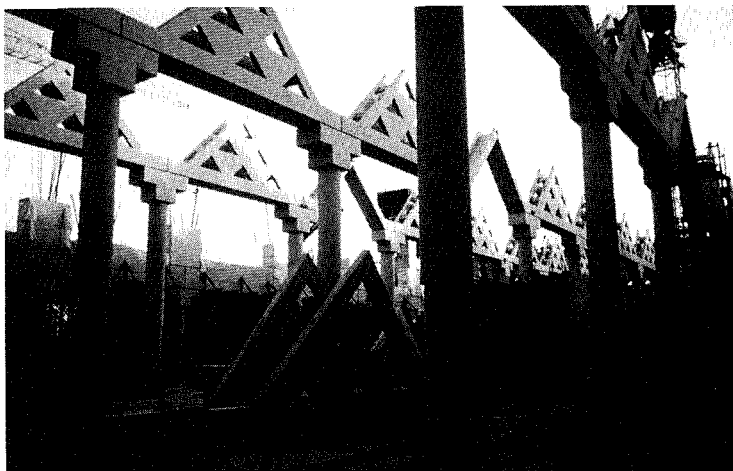
### **The Mosque as a Generator of Spatial and Architectural Quality in the Urban Tissue**

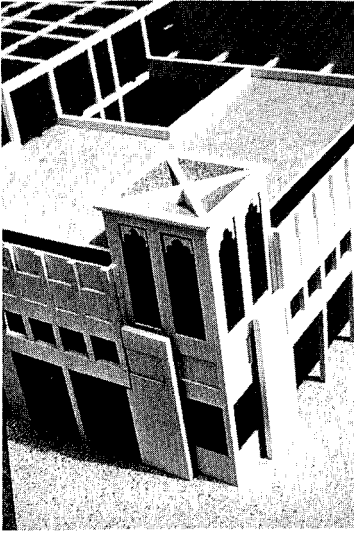
This means that we can use the same lessons and design methods which guide and influence, to a certain extent, the conception of mosque architecture for other building types. In Baghdad, for example, the Presidential Complex relates dialectically to the State Mosque; in Riyadh, the Justice Palace follows the same thinking



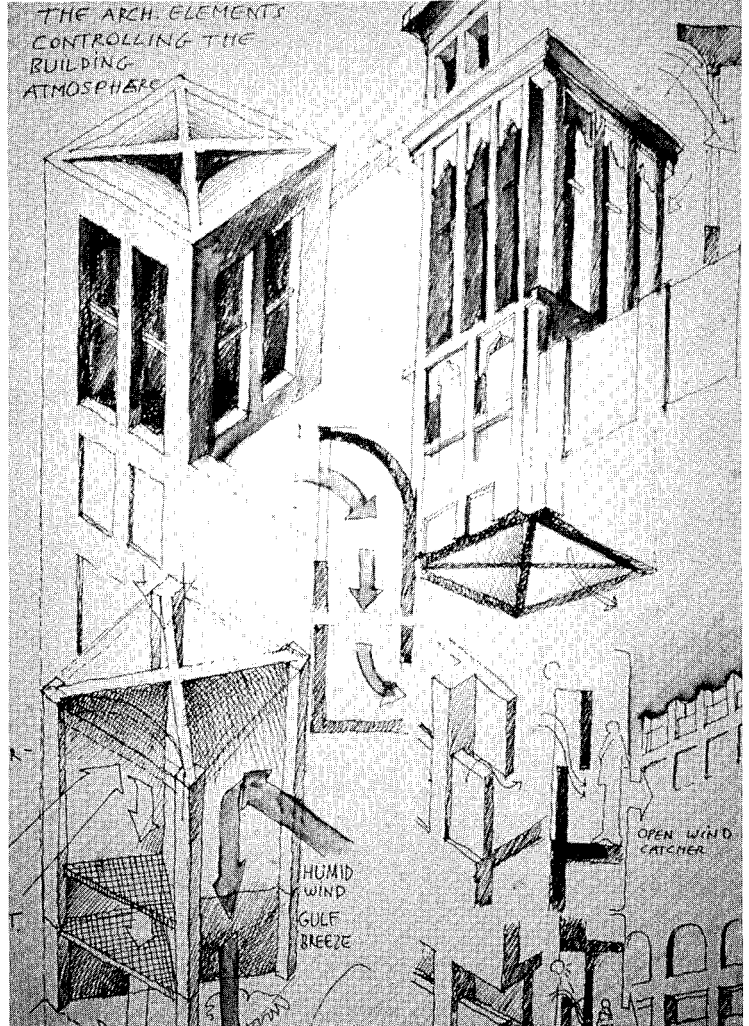


*In the Justice Palace Mosque the structural system relies on prefabrication technology (above) that resembles traditional methods of the past (top, right). The Presidential Complex (right, centre) of Baghdad relates dialectically to the State Mosque. The Justice Palace (bottom, right) in Riyadh follows the thinking process of the Justice Palace Mosque.*





The headquarters of the Chamber of Commerce in Dammam (above) follow the climatic theme of the Doha Mosque (right). All photographs, courtesy of Rasem Badran.



process as the Justice Palace Mosque; and, in Doha, the headquarters of the Chamber of Commerce in Dammam follows the climatical theme emphasized in the Doha Mosque.

Why have we become overwhelmed by inherited achievements of the past? There is a common device through various building types that encompasses a sense of uniformity and excellence, which is not necessarily irrelevant for our present evolution in contemporary architecture. I believe that the dialectic and thought gained by the analytical methods which were carried out through the three mosques have sacred values, which can have a great expressional quality in other building types, as shown in the Dammam Chamber Offices or in the Presidential Palace in Iraq and finally the Justice Palace in Riyadh.



## Discussion

### Jale Erzen

The examples of the contemporary mosque that we have been presented with bring to mind certain critical aspects of this architecture. We have been talking about symbolism. To my mind, if there is any symbolism involved with the mosque, it is essentially one of unity. This is a symbolism that can be dealt with in the physicality of the architectural domain. At least, when I look at the outstanding examples of the Ottoman mosque, I see that this has been very true in all its levels of articulation. For one thing, the mosque is, of all the complex types of buildings, the only one committed basically to a singular function, and it belongs to a religion that is the religion of Unity.

This unity, in architectural terms, can be and has been, in the best examples, concerned with two aspects of architecture. One is structural unity; the other represents the unity of the individual with the spiritual being. The latter is facilitated, in the case of the ritual in the mosque, by a certain intimacy. The mosque, in all its diverse examples, achieved structural unity through the relatedness of material and form, or through the repetition of elements. In the Ottoman case, this unity was manifested to the extreme with a synchronization of structure, form, and material, and a constructional articulation that was in effect at all levels, all the way to decoration. On the other hand, intimacy is concerned with physical and sensory experiences that are created with sound (the muezzin's voice and water); the physical contact with the building (in prayer or in ablution); visual patterns (scintillations of light through latticework and through reflections on surfaces).

The architect of the mosque was faced with a double challenge: the construction itself and the creation of an intimate relationship through the appeal to the senses. To the medieval architect who did not have today's advanced technology to achieve scale and constructional coherence, this was not only an engineering feat, but also a spiritual one, concerned with the power of faith.

As we have seen in the examples that were shown, these two aspects no longer seem to present a great challenge for the contemporary mosque. For one thing, the use of artificial means and materials, such as the loudspeaker, the machine-woven carpet, the prefabricated material, not to mention the general crudeness of the decoration, has to a great extent diminished intimate contact with the building. Contemporary mosques imitating traditional motifs are apt to end up with such shortcomings because the quality and spiritual commitment of medieval craftsmanship are not available today. On the other hand, reinforced concrete, which is in frequent use today, lends itself readily to arbitrary use, and for those who are not particularly trained in its discipline, often is taken for granted, the result being a crude or artificial effect. Besides, in most Islamic countries, building technology seldom provides the possibilities for dealing with grand scale or with modern constructional details.

**Zaenudin Kartadiwiriya**

I would like to add some additional experiences to Hasan-Uddin Khan's extensive research about contemporary directions in mosque design. His examples of mainly large mosques were mostly "deterministic" or "product-oriented" design solutions. There is a tendency, however, in Southeast Asia for architecture to be tied with community development. Community involvement and participation in the design of a mosque should be taken into consideration because in my experience this leads to a "growing mosque" or "process-oriented" mosque design, which is in union with the demands and desires of the community. This involved community approach is a very contemporary issue in mosque design in Indonesia. The people like to be involved in the physical erection of their mosque. Often there is not enough money and the building has to be constructed in stages with improvised additions, or a rich member of the community will donate, for example, coloured tiles that have to be incorporated. The architect has to be able to deal with both situations. I would therefore suggest the addition of the "process approach" to complete the overview.

**Martin Frishman**

In discussing the mosque, or for that matter any building designed to encourage or inspire worship, please bear in mind that spirituality can exist without religion, but that there is no such thing as religion without spirituality.

We live in a time of materialism and for architects, regardless of recent post-modernist trends, in a functionalist era. This means that we are educated and trained to function cerebrally and to deal with the measurable. That which springs from the emotions, the heart, or the spirit, if not actually suppressed, is pushed firmly into second place on the assumption that anything that cannot be measured is at best useless, but could even be considered subversive.

Architects have an instrument, a little box with an attachment with two pins. Push these pins into any piece of wood, and the dial on the box gives you an accurate and immediate reading of the percentage moisture content of the piece of timber. Extremely useful. Inside my head I have created and installed, for my own personal use, a somewhat similar instrument which I have called a "faithometer". When entering a mosque or church, I press a button on the faithometer inside my head and the instrument gives me what I call a "spirituality reading". I have entered innumerable mosques or churches and the spirituality rating has been zero, or practically zero. At other times I have stepped inside such a building and lo and behold — the needle on the dial gives a great leap — high spirituality reading! It happens very rarely and the building which has caused it to happen remains indelibly etched in my memory thereafter. It could be in a gigantic Friday mosque or a tiny desert

masjid, a massive cathedral, or a minute wayside chapel. Quality has nothing to do with size. The impact is immediate and breathtaking and here is the place, one feels at once, where man's spirit is born upwards and his miserable worldly burdens are momentarily forgotten and compensated.

I find it very odd that after more than one hour's discussion on the subject of the mosque not one speaker has had a single word to say on the basic question of man's faith in, and communion with, God, which surely is the prime purpose of the building. On the other hand, there is endless and irrelevant talk about symbolism. I say irrelevant firstly because in order to qualify as a mosque, a building does not need to wear a dome or sport a minaret, and secondly there is in all Islam only one single, unmistakable and universally recognized symbol, and that is the Kaaba. A symbol's function is totally extrinsic, unlike a sign where it is intrinsic. This means that an object can act as a symbol when, and only when, and only as long as you, the referent or viewer, imbue it with a specific meaning that goes beyond its basic existential form. A mosque without a minaret is still a mosque, but a minaret without a mosque is just another tower. The only other thing it could possibly become is a national and not a religious symbol such as the spiral minaret at Samarra in Iraq. In other words, take away the purpose of the call to prayer, and you have divested the object of its meaning. Similarly, if you take a *mihrab* out of its *qibla* wall and re-erect it a mile away, you have transformed it into just another niche, regardless of how elaborately it may be decorated. A church, on the other hand, no matter how minimalist and contemporary its design, simply consists of a meaningless even if beautiful space unless and until you add a crucifix. Not so a small mosque where orientation towards Mecca is the one and only basic requirement, and that orientation may be known or even felt, but it can never be seen. As you have probably observed, even this requirement disappeared in Indonesia where the north-south axis of Buddhism takes pride of place over the direction of Mecca. Whichever way you look at it, no clearer or more challenging platform for pure artistic expression is conceivable. Add to this absence of symbols the presence of the Quran's unmistakable desacrilization of matter and sacrilization of the spirit, or the infinite, and it becomes clear that in the realm of mosque design creative opportunities are limitless.

All the more astonishing surely that when a previous speaker uttered the words "Only Allah can innovate, architects should not even try", nobody said a word in reply. It is precisely innovation that has always been the architects most daunting challenge. The history of architecture is the story of man's creative inventiveness, whether you think of Sinan or Brunelleschi. If this statement is incorrect, then let us get rid of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, and while we are about it, why not get rid of Mozart too?

**Kemas Madani**

I would like to hear Hasan-Uddin Khan's opinion about an element called *mihrab*, a special place for the imam, or leader or commander of the prayer. Almost every mosque today has a *mihrab*, but does a mosque need one? When the Prophet Muhammad for the first time built a mosque in Medina, it was without one; the Masjid al-Haram the first mosque in history built by Ibrahim and now the prime mosque of the Muslims is also without a *mihrab*; and I did not see a special *mihrab* in the Masjid al-Nabawi, the Prophet's mosque, in Medina. But when I designed a small mosque in my village, the community asked me, why did you design our mosque without a *mihrab*?

A mosque with a special place for a *mihrab* gives the impression that the imam is different from the others. It seems that the imam prays for a special God, the community for another God. Some architects plan special decorations for the *mihrab*, which gives the impression that it is an important element in a mosque and that the focus, when praying, is the imam. But as you know, the focus while praying is God, not the imam. In my opinion, the imam and the believers — as equals in God's view — must be in the same space facing the same wall. I assume the *mihrab* began to appear at the time of the caliphate when the imam was the caliph. My question is: in our modern society, especially in democratic countries, when the imam is an ordinary person and only the leader of the prayers, do we need a *mihrab* for our mosques?

**Mohammed Arkoun**

I have listened carefully to the rich presentation made by Hasan-Uddin Khan, and I ask myself how can one relate what I said yesterday to what he rightly said today on the mosques built in the Muslim world during the last thirty years.

I would like to call your attention to an issue which is, in my view, the core of all our discussions on the contemporary expressions of Islam. Hasan-Uddin Khan showed clearly with his selected examples how clients — the State, the community, or private individuals — impose on architects stereotyped, conformist characteristics of what a "Muslim" mosque must be according to the "image" drawn from the past. I say the "image" because the historical reality of Muslim architecture in the past is simply ignored by the clients as well as by the majority of architects. The past — which past exactly? Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid, Safavid, Ottoman? — is a mere representation of conventional elements of a mosque, such as the dome, the minaret, or the *mihrab*.

This reference to the past accepted and used by outstanding architects — Muslims and non-Muslims alike — is mythological and ideological, not historical. I stress here a major ideological fact: architects using the past in this way do exactly the same intellectual

and semiological *bricolage* as the so-called *ulama* in charge of interpreting and restoring the *shari'a*, the “Islamic law”, regardless of all the critical historical studies accumulated since the beginning of the twentieth century.

This ideological convergence of architect and *ulama* in the creation of the built environment and the legal system in contemporary Muslim societies is not seen by any analyst of these societies. This fact shows the originality of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture as a free and open space for critical inquiry on contemporary Islam, as an overwhelming ideological factor imposing the evolution — or rather the disintegration of — Islamic thought and Muslim societies.

I urge all architects working in Muslim societies to become aware of their unconscious solidarity with the most conservative *ulamas* who serve the regimes established after the independence of these societies. The same *ijtihad* required from jurists and theologians is also a condition of creativity in architecture and urbanism. History is a discipline for criticism, not for lazy imitation of selected fragments, detached from the ancient monuments and separated from their cultural, political, and economic contexts.

This raises the big problem of the “unthinkable”: all the problems related to structure and history, anthropology of the past and linear chronological historicism, are just unthinkable for architects as well as for *ulamas*. Let me add that our societies are in fact run by decision-makers, in all fields, who improvise solutions according to their unconscious cultural system without critical analysis.

### **Saleh Lamei-Mostafa**

We have seen different types and different forms of mosque architecture. It has been said that mosque spaces are secular, that Islam does not accept the holiness of the space nor its symbolism, that mosques become symbols of the State, and that mosques are no longer integrated in the urban fabric but imposed by clients without concern for the community. I would like to say here that I am a conservative and as a Muslim I belong to the conservative party. For me the Islamic context — which governments, clients, as well as architects have forgotten — expresses functional human and social requirements which are integrated with the principles and values deriving from the Islamic doctrine. From the Hadith, for example, we have basic design principles such as the direction of the mosque. At the beginning Islam flourished in areas of different advanced civilizations and different cultures and therefore adapted and evolved plans which met the prerequisites of the society while based on the principles and values of the Islamic doctrine.

To get a better understanding of the architecture of the mosque in the Islamic context, we must refer to the mosque of the Prophet. It was a simple construction of palm trunks and reeds and served the many needs of the community as well as being his own house.

This link of house and mosque could be inspired by the Quran (Sura 10, verse 87): “Make your homes places of worship, conduct prayers, and give good news to the faithful.” In the first twenty years of Islamic history, the mosque was never a monumental structure, as Islam is concerned with the essence of things rather than with their appearance. At the time, the Prophet, who had travelled to Syria for his trade and had seen many churches and other imposing buildings, could have had a mosque of stone or used the richest materials in his construction. But it was not the form or the shape, but the Islamic context and the purity of the inner space that were important.

It is the role of a building in the community rather than its form that is important. We therefore find in many Muslim countries a number of buildings that have been reshaped and remodelled to be adapted for use as mosques. An example of this is the case of the Omari Mosque in Saida, Lebanon, which won an Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1989. Originally part of a crusader’s fortress of the thirteenth century, with a romanesque exterior and a simple interior, it had been converted to a mosque. During the 1982 Israeli invasion of the city, the mosque was destroyed. But instead of rebuilding a new, more elegant and more elaborate mosque, the people of Saida wanted to restore the building that had come to represent the centre of their social, political, and religious life, a symbol of national unity, regardless of its outer image.

### **Raj Rewal**

I shall be very brief and quote an old proverb from Punjab: “You cannot marry your grandmother but you can marry somebody much younger who looks like her.” This sums up my attitude towards architectural expressions for old historical buildings. I think that essence is more important than appearance.

### **Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim**

I have to congratulate Hasan-Uddin Khan for his presentation and add two comments. The first deals with methodology and the general typology of the four categories he proposed. My reservation is about both the categories themselves and the general assumptions behind them. If the categories include not only the formal aspects of the mosque but also the process of design, then we will have some trouble accepting the grouping of the Gournia Mosque and the Mopti Mosque, for instance, under the same vernacular category, as the former involves a formal implanted architectural design, while the latter is the product of a creative continuation of local traditions. The same difficulties arise when grouping El-Wakil Mosque in Jeddah with the mosque in Naser City in Cairo under “historicist”. Another troubling example is the Diba Mosque classified as “modern”, while in fact it is loaded with historical and cultural references.

My second remark concerns the “progressive sacralization of the space of the mosque” which has been mentioned. I think this should be examined in the overall concept and meaning of sacredness in Islam. The event of prayer in Islam is meant to bring Muslims into unison with Allah. It is part of daily life and is not bound by place. Sacredness is a quality and not a spatial attribute peculiar to the mosque. The dichotomy between the sacred and the secular is not helping us; we ought to search for a quality that includes beauty and excellence.

#### **William Lim**

It seems to me that we are working with what we call innovation within traditional history. Professor Arkoun poses a very important question: what do we want to learn from history? Is history inspirational? Can we think the unthinkable? I am afraid that in Islamic architecture, especially in mosque design, we may have been locked in time — locked in a situation in which we are actually talking to ourselves within a changing world.

We can look at changing world events on the one hand — China, Eastern Europe, Berlin, the Gulf — and talk on the other hand about architectural developments which have taken place in the past twenty years. Irrespective of whether one agrees with definitions such as post-modern, late modern, new modern, what really matters is that great changes are going on in architecture today throughout the world. How do we respond? Are these changes being reflected in Islamic architecture? It would certainly seem important in terms of the mosque.

In the case of Christian churches after the war, Le Corbusier (a non-Christian) created new directions in church architecture. Present-day choices and compromises in Islamic architecture are mostly disappointing. Should one compromise, go back in history, or explore new ground? Professor Arkoun said: think the unthinkable.

#### **Raja Fuziah Raja Tun Uda**

I would like to make an observation on the issue of the role and influence of the State as decision-maker in determining the design of mosques. I understand from Hasan-Uddin Khan that the accumulated knowledge in this area has been communicated to professionals through the Aga Khan Award for Architecture programme. I would, therefore, like to ask the members of the Award whether it would not be possible at this time, now that the programme has reached a certain degree of maturity, to establish a forum through which the accumulated knowledge could be shared with policy- and decision-makers.

### **Djauhari Sumintardja**

In Indonesia, we are not only concerned with new mosque building but also with the adaptation of old mosques — those with inadequate floor space — to the needs of present-day society. In the big and medium-sized cities of Indonesia, mosques have to undergo major changes by partial or total renovation or even demolition to make room for new larger mosques. This means seeking and establishing a new identity.

Unfortunately, in too many cases, perhaps owing to lack of involvement by architects, many of the traditional great mosques have been transformed into buildings with no aesthetic values, as, for example, the great mosques of Bandung and Palembang.

On the other hand, inspiration from non-Islamic subcultures for Islamic buildings such as mosques is still very much alive in Indonesia. For example, in the design of the Banjarmasin Great Mosque in Kalimantan, a group of artists from Bandung transformed primitive ornamental motifs inspired from the Dayak tribes into beautiful calligraphic decorations carrying the names of Allah and Muhammad and Quranic verses. This transformation of rich traditional elements into new adaptations has been a great source of pride for Indonesia.

Finally I would like to mention the mass production of mosques in Indonesia. Funded with *zakat* money, some 450 standardized mosques with the same design and size have been successfully built throughout the archipelago. This may be the most unique feature of our part of the world, which should be noted in the seminar.

### **Asaduz Zaman**

Islam professes purity. If we look at the built form of the early Islamic period in the Middle Eastern countries, we see that the forms used (domes, arches, walls), as well as the construction techniques, reflect the materials and methodology available at the time, as well as the climatic requirements. In the same fashion the Great Mosque of Yogyakarta, with its use of timber and forms such as the pitched roof and large overhangs, is a pure reflection of the technology and climatic conditions of the area and an uplifting experience. Also the Yaama Mosque in Africa, with its use of mud and timber, creates a pure form of design the way it should be.

Nowadays we see lots of false images of Islamic architecture that do not stem from the local techniques or materials. Often a dome or a pitched roof seen on the outside is in fact built over a flat concrete roof on the inside. Only when building traditions are respected can the internal space have a spiritual quality.

In the modern context, advanced technology and new materials should be explored in the same way to express designs, structures, and construction methods true to the values and spirit of the Islamic



world. Whether a building form is traditional or modern, it must express true concepts and include architectural details that reflect the true characteristics of the materials used.

### **Ismail Serageldin**

I would like to link together some of the comments that have been made. But first, I would like to deplore what appears to be the “public housing” of state-sponsored religious buildings. Once you standardize things, you will have a degraded environment as we have seen in many housing situations.

Dr. Saleh Lamei has asked what the community’s views are and whether they are being solicited. William Lim has asked earlier how Charles Moore would have responded to the competition. I think those of us who had the privilege of attending Charles Moore’s lecture to students would have seen how he had handled the award-winning church in California. Through a series of four workshops involving the parishioners who commissioned the study, the design was adopted by a minimum of 60 to 70 percent of the vote, and the final design by over 85 or 90 percent. But the main thing is that the end result was quintessentially Charles Moore, and the end result was one that I doubt the community would have ever produced by itself, but yet it was adopted by it. That interaction between the creative talent of the architect and the participation of the community in making the decision is something that we see too little of. It may well explain why so many of Dogan Kuban’s attempts at introducing modernism have been rejected by state-sponsored as opposed to community-involved projects. It is not new in the Islamic world, and certainly Abdelhalim has worked this way, with such community efforts, in his garden project in Cairo. But perhaps of all the various examples we have seen, the boldest was the White Mosque in Yugoslavia. It was one that was adopted by the community and paid for by the community through seven years of dialogue with the architect in question. Maybe that tells us something about how to bring together the sacred and the secular and how to bring together the sense of community with the role of the architect.

### **Hasan-Uddin Khan**

I have a great disadvantage and a great advantage. The disadvantage is in the number of questions and the advantage is that I can choose what I respond to. So I am going to take a few of the questions which I feel I can address rather quickly and hope we can come back to the others. I will start with a general comment and end with one, but answer the questions in between.

My emphasis started with the client as the basis, and the response by the architect. I would like to stress this aspect, as Mohammed Arkoun talked about the role of the client, education, the architect’s

response falling into the same trap as the jurists. And I feel that it is really not just the question of a client creating such a situation: it is a relationship, it is a circle, and I totally agree that there has to be an intellectual breakthrough of some kind. The difficulty always seems to be that a set of problems is given to the architect which he has to respond to. Therefore he either has to think of the unthinkable, to reinterpret and look at modernity, or face the constraints that are built in. The architect is dependent upon that. What he can do is say to his client, "I want to rethink this", but then the client could say, "You keep thinking; I will get another architect". It becomes a matter of earning one's bread and butter. In very few cases, if he is very lucky, an architect can command the jobs that he wants.

There are actually a lot of things I would like to discuss with Professor Arkoun, one of which is rupture. He says that ruptures have always occurred, and at some point later he also says that there is a great deal of assimilation, of adoption. It is true that both processes happened throughout history, but my own reading of the situation is that ruptures occurred, assimilations occurred, and architects changed as time went on, but the rupture that occurred at the point of modernization, the point of industrialization, the point of Westernization, was so much greater than any of the previous ruptures that the process of assimilation, the allowance of time, the allowance of being able to take the models and change them, could not happen. And therefore I do feel the question of rupture in contemporary modern architecture becomes one of significance, that it is much greater than the rupture with the past.

The question of secularization and sacralization of space is an important subject. I was not really taking a position on this. In fact what I am arguing for is that this mix between the sacred and the secular is a false dichotomy. It is not a question of either/or; it is part of the design process. I see this in the buildings around me and what clients are asking, what people are interpreting, what societies are doing.

To take up the point of centrality of the mosque: although you say that the centrality is not centrality in life, when you look at the briefs, the actual programmes that are given in all those institutions, and the case studies, the reason almost always given is that the mosque is central to Islamic life. "It is our greatest manifestation and therefore we would like you to specifically [and I am talking about the last fifteen years perhaps] emphasize the mosque as a focal point." It is not enough just to build a mosque as a place for people to go to, but it has to stand out. So I would say that there is an underlying image in the eyes of those who are commissioning a mosque that this has a very definite central role within the life of their institutions.

On the question of traditional and modern forms, which a lot of people have addressed, I would like to say that in a mosque

competition in Saudi Arabia — for which I was secretary to the jury — the majority of young architects (we had 220 entries) were trying to break away and make a leap in imagination. There was a tendency among younger architects who did not have a client to break loose and go wild and do all kinds of interesting things. The tendency of the jury, however, was to place a certain conservatism on the situation. So the winners of that competition followed either historicist or fairly vernacular models. But among the young this attitude was not there.

The question of structural unity — I think it was the model of the Ottoman — Jale Erzen brought up is reflected very much in the Yugoslavia mosque and the Islamabad mosque. My contention is that the best model of the strongest historical form is the Ottoman, with its central space and pencil minaret. I agree that the question of intimacy and construction is something that one has to look at in greater depth, but that model and the technology are overriding concerns. I disagree with your statement on concrete as a material because I think concrete allows a certain plasticity and great flexibility. Within restrictions of its own, it allows a great variety of shapes and forms.

The question of the community in decision-making was brought up several times and is absolutely vital. The thing we find again in our case studies is that under most circumstances, even when there is a discussion and public exposure of the plans to the community, in the end it is only two or three people who make the decision. I think it is true that even when the congregation or the community is involved, the decision on a mosque design is taken either by the architect or the imam or by those financing the mosque. There are two or three who make that final interpretation of what they believe the community said. So it comes back to rhetoric and reality.

Martin Frishman mentions the spiritual factor in building. I find it hard to respond because the reading of that spirituality is an individual response, it cannot be prescribed, it is a response that an architect gets across in a particular situation. In fact, one of the things that struck me as very interesting in the Bhong Mosque, which everyone decries, is that for local villagers it has a fantastic sense of spirituality, a wonderful sense of communion, because it has this richness of its own. So in fact the Bhong Mosque on a spiritual level for the local population actually answers the problem very well.

The question of community and dialogue strikes me. A lot of the examples I showed were results of architectural competitions, and I think architectural competitions in general are also to blame for some of this way of looking at design. What happens is that a design is produced without discussion with anyone, and once a concept is formulated, to change it, to move into a totally different situation, becomes almost impossible. I can understand the need

for a competition which talks about ideas in a first stage, but I think the best relationship is always when you choose your architect, when you choose your designer, and you know who your client is. In the end you create that dialogue, but that cannot happen through competitions. To be fair, all our major buildings are the result of architectural competitions, and it is a two-edged sword.

I would like to end with the question of pan-Islamism. It is not decided by Islam Professor Kuban says, but I was using pan-Islamic as a kind of a tendency that occurred. It is pan-Islamic in the sense that it went across the Islamic world; it was not the reflection of a particular style, nor the result of a particular set of instructions, or a very particular approach, but there were certain elements that were becoming seen around the world as standards. And one of the things that I was hoping to get across is that pan-Islamism and this so-called regionalism are really two sides of the same coin. They both have to be dealt with simultaneously; they are not an either/or situation. I find this plurality and diversity to be very positive and believe that research into this amazing diversity of technology and forms is what will give architecture strength. I myself would not want to see an architecture that was limited either by imagination, time, or materials.

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**“Brother in Islam, Please Draw us a Mosque”  
Muslims in the West: A Personal Account**  
*Gulzar Haider*

**Comments**

*Raj Rewal*  
*Darmawan Prawirohardjo*  
*Ali Shuaibi*

**Discussion**

*Josef Prijotomo, Tay Khang Soon, Ismail Serageldin, Tay  
Khang Soon, William Lim, Salma Samar Damluji, Syed  
Zaigham Shafiq Jaffery, Arif Hasan, Syed Zaigham Shafiq  
Jaffery, Hasan Poerbo, Aziz Esmail, Mohammed Arkoun,  
Ismail Serageldin, Syed Zaigham Shafiq Jaffery, Dogan Kuban,  
Raj Rewal, Syed Zaigham Shafiq Jaffery*

## **“Brother in Islam, Please Draw us a Mosque” Muslims in the West: A Personal Account**

*Gulzar Haider*

### **“This House is our Mosque”**

It was thirty years ago when I left the city of Shalimar Gardens, my childhood home, to get myself educated and price tagged by the advanced universities of America.<sup>1</sup> On my way there I prayed my first Friday in the West, in England in a small English house on a corner lot in Wimbledon. An old man who sensed the question in my eyes spoke to me: “You might not have seen anything like this, my son, but this house is our mosque, we pray here.”

The following Friday, I was at the old Georgian campus of the University of Illinois. About twenty of us prayed in the Faculty Club in the Union Building. We rearranged the furniture, spread rolls of green cloth at the appropriate skew angle, and listened to the sermon of Muhammad Abu Saleh, a mathematics student from Jordan, our “imam of the week”. As I was initiated into the community, I was also told that on the fifth Friday it would be my turn to deliver the sermon and lead the prayers.

Since we were few in number, representing different national origins, feeling alien and transient, that one hour of prayer so far away from our own mosques would linger on as a warm feeling for days. That Faculty Club was to become our surrogate mosque, more precisely our musalla, for many years to come.<sup>2</sup> Preparing my maiden sermon was much harder than all the assignments of graduate studies. I remember my recitation of those verses of the Quran wherein God affirms Abraham and Ishmael’s building a House for Him.<sup>3</sup> Today I remember, with a touch of pleasant embarrassment, my audacity in proposing that hidden in the verse was the primordial covenant of architecture, that architecture was a sacred act when performed in the bounds of the commandments. And that, therefore, architecture could potentially be idolatrous when committed in defiance of the commandments.

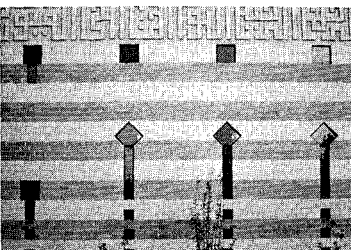
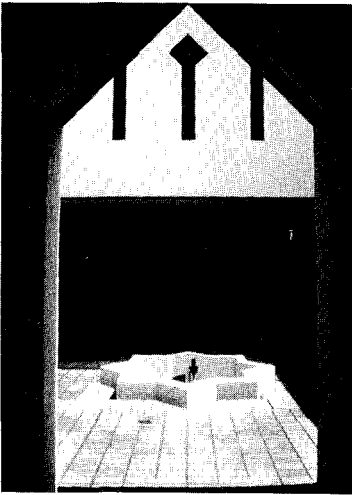
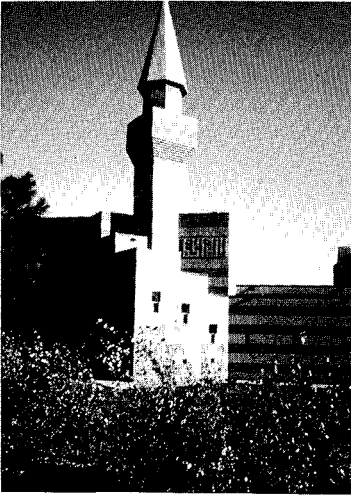
By 1963, a continental organization was founded at the University of Illinois, which came to be known as the MSA, Muslim Students Association of the U.S.A. and Canada. At its second convention I volunteered to speak about the architectural heritage of Muslims.

Like the first sermon this too was a painful experience. It also turned out to be the year when my studio tutor, through the recommendation of my history professor, gave me special permission to substitute one of my studio projects with the design of a mosque in North America. My total knowledge of the Muslim architectural tradition was based on my memories of Lahore, and my visual encounters with Pope’s *Survey of Persian Art and Architecture*.<sup>4</sup> But who cared about tradition then. I had not travelled across the oceans only to recall my past. I was totally innocent even of the potential choice between the old and the new. Old was the “problem”, and solutions lay in the newness, the differentness in modernity. The shift of orientation of the Masjid-i-Shah against the great Maydan of Isfahan was posed as one of the problems that needed a new solution. It was a challenge to the ego of a young

designer who had come across the oceans, and was to show his professor that he was worthy of such a task.

I confronted the problem by eliminating it. My prayer hall was circular in plan: a symbol of “unity” and free from the demands of orientation. I solved the problem of columns by invoking the long span virtues of a single inverted thin shell dish. I took the pool from the courtyard, made it much larger, and let my mosque float in it like a lotus. Finally, I proposed a bridge that was symbolically the path from the worldly parking lot to the other-worldly prayer hall. And not being able to control my creative momentum, I cut a laser slice of space right through a transparent *mihrab* and ended it in the garden beyond. Perhaps the most daring gesture was to propose large-scale calligraphy on top of the dome. The idea was to let the modern man in flight look down and recognize that it was a contemporary mosque in the West. My professors rated this project excellent. Three decades later it is a touch embarrassing to confess, but perhaps forgivable, that I was fully convinced of my high grade. The project was kept for the departmental archives and I never saw it again. God is indeed Merciful to those who make innocent mistakes.

The next mosque design was in 1967-68, a joint project with another Muslim student. We entered the competition for the Grand National Mosque in Islamabad (now the well-known Faisal Mosque). I had already earned my bachelor’s degree in architecture from Illinois, and my partner had just come to America in pursuit of a master’s degree in architecture. The site and the beautiful surroundings, complex programme and grandiose scale convinced us that it called for an equally heroic design response. We thought it to be a sign of divine help when both of us independently converged on St. Mark’s Square in Venice as a source of inspiration. We were to do an Islamic “St. Mark’s”, not in the lagoon of Venice, but in the rolling foothills of Islamabad: a trapezoidal setting by three-sided educational blocks, a horizontal plaza with geometric stone patterns, and an artificially twisted entrance to create an element of surprise.<sup>5</sup> The prayer hall was an oblique and truncated trapezium. The *mihrab* area was a round sculpted form inspired by Ronchamp. And to further avoid any remote chance that someone might mistake our building as “traditional”, we proposed a 400-foot high and 50-foot wide minaret-tower, visible from the peaks of Murree Hills. It was to be covered with turquoise glazed tiles, and to contain a library and a museum accessible in the same way as the Guggenheim Museum in New York. St. Mark’s, Ronchamp, Guggenheim, and a heavy dose of abstracted calligraphy; it was sure to win the hearts of any jury, we thought. We won nothing! And when we saw the winner, we were amazed at how any contemporary jury could select such a “traditional” scheme with four minarets. We convinced ourselves that the jury must have been a gathering of turbaned old men with white beards.<sup>6</sup> That might give you an idea of how “modern” we were.



*Exterior view (top), interior view (centre), detail of exterior brickwork and windows (above). The Islamic Centre, Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, Arkansas, U.S.A., completed 1984. Architect: Gulzar Haider Photographs: Courtesy of the architect*

In 1969, after eight years of carefree life as a student, I suddenly found myself living North in Canada and a member of the capital's Muslim community. The city "mosque" consisted of two adjacent houses in a residential neighbourhood. Not very different from Wimbledon, eight years earlier. After the first Friday introductions, I was called, in the name of Islam, to a dinner-gathering by the president of Ottawa's Muslim Association.

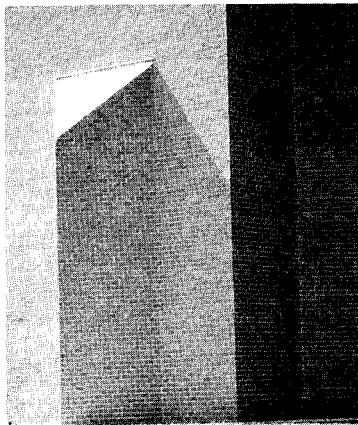
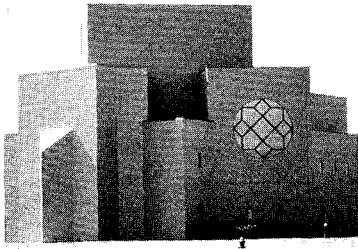
"Brothers will welcome you, Inshallah," I was told in a commanding tone, "and you will play an important role in the great future of Muslims in the greater Ottawa-Hull area, Canada's Capital Region." I could not help feeling a sense of divine appointment. Eager and enthusiastic, I walked in with a sense of destiny and duty. By the end of the evening I was not only a member of the Ottawa mosque construction committee, I was also expected to perform a minor miracle of designing a mosque with infinite space and zero cost.<sup>7</sup> That was the beginning of a relationship marked by extreme loyalty and utter frustration. Only a great sense of mission fuelled by faith in the unseen God or a rare kind of psychiatric condition could make one survive such a minefield of contradictory and even mutually exclusive positions on a unanimously felt need. It surprises me, and even worries me, that I survived that committee for sixteen months. The mosque was finally built six years later, but thank God I was not the designer.

There is, or has been, a committee like this in every Muslim urban population in North America. Having survived eight such committees in the past twenty years, I have started to feel like a worn-out sailor with many tales to tell. Suffice it to say, for the time being, that there are four domains in which I face most of my storms.

Firstly, there is the programmatic confrontation. From the grandiose schemes of a complete Islamic campus to a humble warehouse cleaned and fixed by weekend volunteers; from planting the seeds of a Muslim town in North America, on the model of the Prophet's Medina, to managing with a bare musalla and focusing on the Islamic upbringing of children, most clients go through the battle between their grand imaginations and harsh realities.

Secondly, there is the debate on the sources of funds: from total self-reliance and thus independence of the community from any external influences to the other extreme whereby communities, with pious declarations and coloured prospectuses under their arms, have wasted hard-earned money in chasing guilt-ridden princes and other rich nobility. In the mid-seventies the art of organized begging was perfected by expatriate Muslims based on the model of organized selling by the Americans. And, finally, there has never been a shortage of the die-hard believers pronouncing with religious zeal that "once the foundations are laid out God will send the money, in His own mysterious ways, for His new House in the western wasteland of non-believers." I have often wondered why God has to wait for foundations before putting His miracles in motion!





*Exterior view (top), the mihrab from the outside (above). Mosque of the National Headquarters of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) in Plainfield, Indiana, U.S.A., completed 1983. Architect: Gulzar Haider Photographs: Courtesy of the architect*

Thirdly, and perhaps most crucially, there have been the opposing forces of voluntarism and professionalism. It is striking how a group of professionals, diligent and successful in their fields, turn into totally insensitive amateurs exploiting the professional services of those involved in designing and building monuments. Sincere and selfless, but mostly useless, people volunteer and ruin the projects. Classic cases include chemists turning into “after-five general contractors”, turbine experts becoming electrical consultants, transportation engineers offering to design structures, and everyone and their aunts and uncles producing architectural “designs” in ball-point pen on scraps of ruled paper.<sup>8</sup>

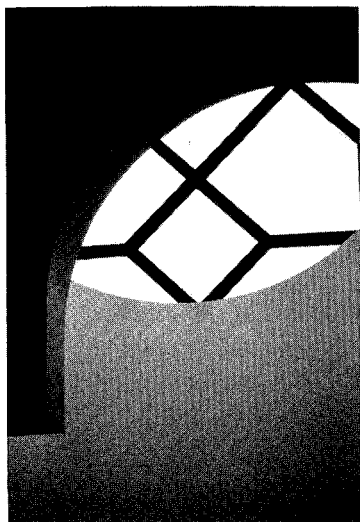
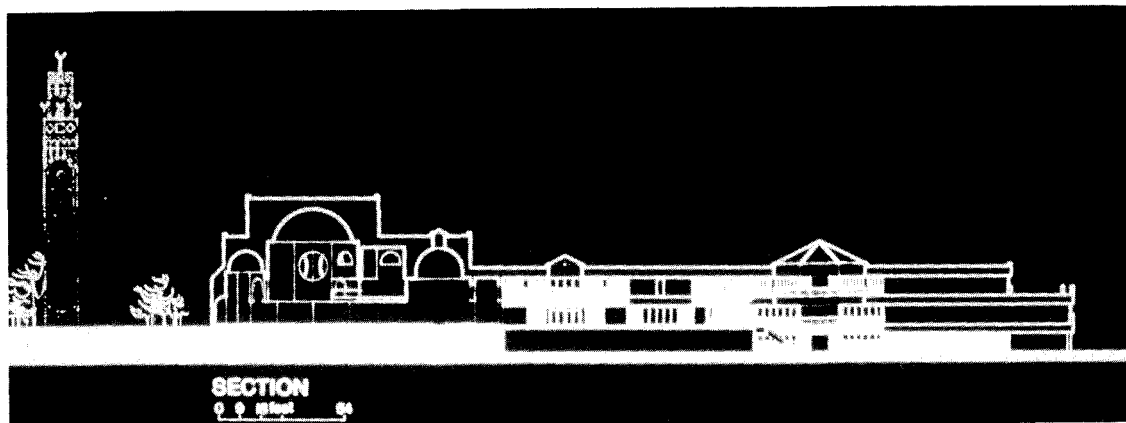
Lastly, there is the recurrent issue of architectural expressions. Nothing is more telling of the communal fragmentation of ideas and images than the kinds of mosques people carry in their minds. It is not easy to untangle the complex network of individual and collective memories of first-generation immigrants. Little wonder that whenever a Muslim bank or an airline publishes a calendar of mosques, their torn pages start to appear in the mosque committee meetings. I have also the unique honour of having received a childlike paste-up calendar made of cutouts collected by a member of the community who owns an auto-body repair shop.

There are generally two positions held by the protagonists of a mosque as an essential symbol of Islamic presence: one that wishes change through technology and modernity, and the other that aims for recognizable imagery. The first forms the majority and upholds change and adaptability as a strong formative force in all spheres of its newly adopted life in the non-Muslim West. And it is precisely this pursuit of novelty, as an end in itself, that has produced mosques with flying saucer domes and rocket minarets. The pursuit of a modern minaret is in itself indicative of the compulsion to seek change lest lack of change be taken as a sign of stagnation and cultural death.<sup>9</sup>

The demand for visual authenticity in the mosque, however, has intensified over the last decade. In the Western world it is not so much a new commitment to tradition but the result of emerging assertiveness of the Muslim community. Of course, the post-functional search for “meaning” and return of the “philosophical inquiry” through architecture have been timely for the emergent discourse on Islamic architecture. It is no longer a taboo, as it was in the sixties and early seventies, to be designing a place for religious worship and spiritual contemplation.

Now after this analytical digression allow me to return to my own journey.

A sabbatical in Saudi Arabia in 1977-78, accompanied by travels through Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey, lifted many veils and the landscape within started to clear. I saw the destructive and alienating forces of architecture in the name of development, progress, and civilizational fast-tracking. I also experienced the ecology of



*Design project, longitudinal section (top), interior view (above).*

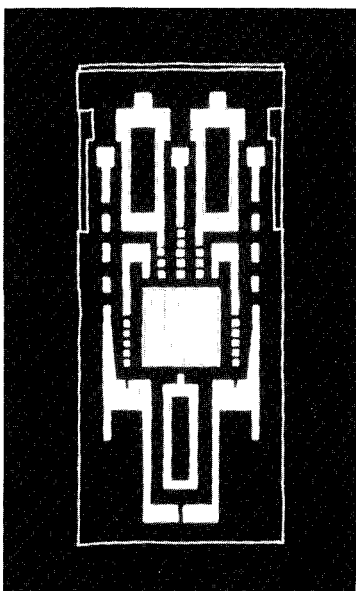
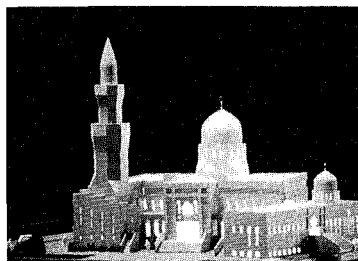
architecture, literature, belief, philosophy, commerce, culture, and craft. It dawned on me for the first time that architecture was a formative energy of culture rather than a mute expression of it. Since then I have become free of the disempowering absurdities of the fragmented selves of my clients. To me every client group brings with it an opportunity to learn, to unlearn, and through work, and much supplication, get closer, however slowly, to understanding the irreducibles of a mosque.

The first such opportunity came in 1979. The Muslim Student Association that we had started in 1963 was now sixteen years old. It had grown into the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). Being invited to design the ISNA national headquarters mosque in Plainfield, Indiana, was an honour I received with much self-doubt. The emotion reminded me of the first Friday prayer that I had conducted in the Illinois Faculty Club. As before, it was my destiny to fulfil the covenant of the architect that I spoke of then. With Abraham's House for God I started my search for a place of prayer for those who, at home or in "occidental exile",<sup>10</sup> turn their faces to the Blessed House in Mecca and recite:

*Lo I have turned my face  
Firmly and truly  
Towards Him who willed  
The heavens and the earth  
And never shall I assign  
Partners to Him.<sup>11</sup>*

I was also very intrigued by the Divine attributes of the Hidden and the Manifest.<sup>12</sup> And in all the beautiful names of God, I searched for a special wisdom to guide the designer who must create but not confront, offer but not attack, and express profoundness in a language understandable and pleasing to the listener.

I chose to distinguish the exterior from the interior. I chose to veil this mosque. As a designer I invoked the need for meaningful



*General view (top), plan (above), dome, minaret and mihrab (below, right).*

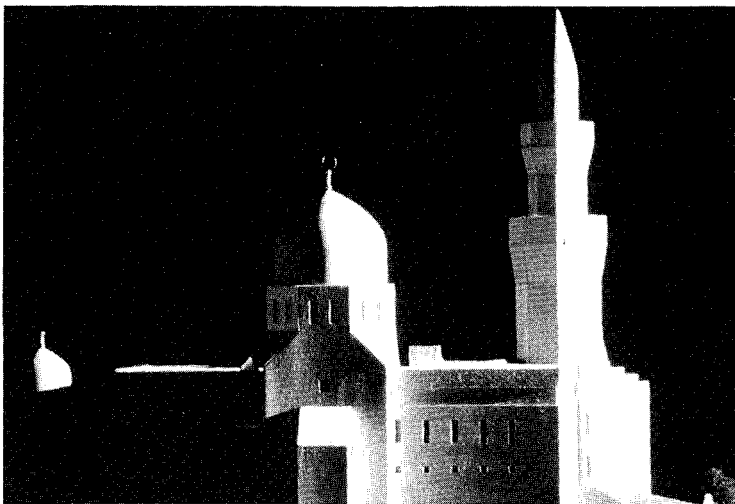
*Bait-ul-Islam Mosque, Toronto, Canada. Model, Project design. Completion date: July 1991. Architect: Gulzar Haider Photographs: Courtesy of the architect*

and purposeful dissimulation. I thought of my building as an oyster where the brilliance and the essence were in the interiority of space while the expressed form sought human ecological harmony and modesty, perhaps even anonymity, in its surroundings.

It was important for me, therefore, to study the image of Muslims that existed in the mind of the non-Muslim host society. Muslim reality during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was observed and projected through a series of many distorting prisms. There were paintings, romantic fictions, exotic travelogues, and, later, circuses, movies, movie theatres, magic potions, exotic foods, music, all capitalizing on the immediate expectations of magic fortunes and paradisaical sensuality. From Las Vegas and Atlantic City's "pleasures for sale" to Barnum and Bailey's "Greatest Show on Earth" to Shriner's "Temples", all exploited, with gluttonous appetite, the symbols associated with the Muslim past. Considering the perils of first impression misunderstanding, I chose to be "silent" on the overt expression of my mosque.

The project was built, has been used since 1982, and remains an enigma, especially to those Muslims who are used to seeing mosques and not praying in them. Those who have been inside are struck with the "mosqueness" of it all. It is fascinating that the clients who were very proud of this building a decade ago have now started to express what a Freudian might diagnose as "dome and minaret envy".

Almost ten years after the ISNA Mosque, I received another commission, this time from the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, to design for them the Canadian national headquarters mosque in Toronto. This community, declared out of Islamic bounds, suffering consequences that come with such "doctrinal eviction", and now immigrant in Canada and U.S.A., wanted all the architectural help to express their Islamic presence in Canada. Quite understandably,

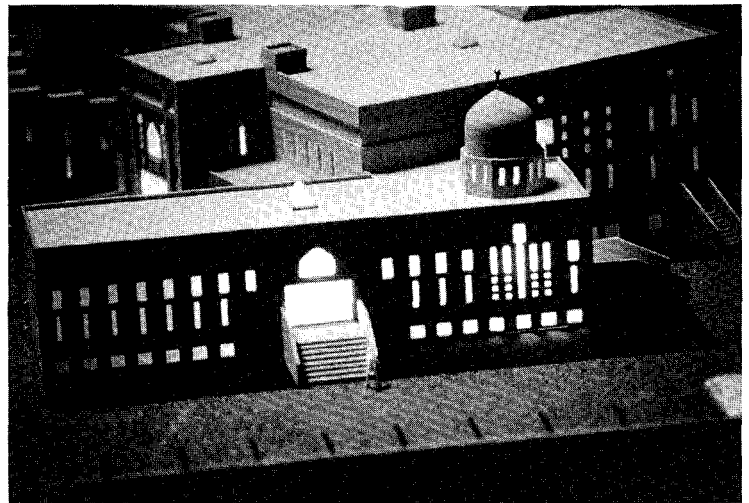


from their position, they chose to call this the Bait-ul-Islam, i.e., the “House of Islam”. The formative directive this time was the pronouncement, the assertion through architecture, rather than the anonymity through dissimulation.

The ten years between ISNA in Plainfield and Bait-ul-Islam in Toronto have also provided me with numerous pedagogical insights, the most crucial being the experience of getting to know another culture through the direct experience of its art, or “tactile knowledge” as we ended up calling it. It was through the interpretative drawings of carpets, miniatures, and gardens, as well as the recitation of poetry (that accompanied miniatures), followed by the attempt to draw a synthesis of all these experiences, that Islamic culture came alive for many of my Canadian students. In reversing the process into the design of the Bait-ul-Islam, it has yielded results that cannot be fully expounded here. The building is under construction and scheduled to be opened for prayer on 5 July 1991.

Two more communities, Kingston and Miami, have entrusted me with the designs of their mosques. The client committee is still composed of the “magnificent seven”, only the name of the city keeps changing. Every design experience, however, ushers me into further realizations and questions. Twenty-five years after the first encounter, I had a chance to visit Wimbledon again. The house-mosque is now wrapped in white glazed tiles, there is an apology of an entrance arch, there are some green bands, and the roof has acquired a small dome and a minaret.

The original question still haunts me. If that old man was so profoundly confident of the identity of his mosque in Wimbledon, because the community prayed in it, what happened over the years? Why did they feel compelled to “Islamicize” that English house by the stick-on signs?



*Entrance façade*

**“Welcome, Brother Architect, to our Madhouse”**

I have wandered far and wide in landscapes of the Muslim diaspora in search of opportunities to serve. With youthful idealism blunted, and time asserting its ruthless compulsion to move, I offer myself, with transparent eagerness, to design mosques for Muslims in the West. Repeatedly, I get seduced by the mosque committees promising me credit in the life “hereafter” and end up in painfully one-sided, almost exploitative, contracts in this life “here”. A scream remains muffled in my chest and I am afraid that if it ever escapes it will startle the angels.

As a designer meeting my clients, I find myself imprisoned in a cell with comatose imams, deaf firebrands, blind guides, and unemployable volunteers. With some strange resilience I have walked into many such cells across North America, but the same macabre actors are ahead of me to stage the same mad show all over again. It is my unique honour to introduce you to the “magnificent seven”, the perennial mosque committee, my predestined clients:

*Ray Beshara* is the owner of a Lebanese restaurant, an older person with tremendous energy and a forceful voice well trained in shouting at the cooks, waiters, and his family. He practises all these skills in our meetings.

*Dr. Mohammed Noor* is an ophthalmologist who married an American nurse. He is a self-acclaimed champion of commonsense and reduces any situation to three categories: terminal and hopeless; target for a surgical strike; or an illness existing entirely in the head.

*Dr. Barkat Ali*, professor of pure mathematics and an occasional poet, is a man of considerable inheritance from a family of enshrined saints, whose descendants, thanks to devout farmers, had become landed lords of rural India. He is a voice from another world and a distant time.

*Qaid Ansari*, is a civil engineer with a master’s degree in transportation planning. To him, a mosque is an accommodation and movement network problem and does not need an architect who is sure to disregard function, make woolly arguments about beauty, and render the project unaffordable.

*Omar Muhtasib* is a civil servant who lost his job in the recent government cuts. He presently earns his living by helping people do their tax returns. A man with a stern and serious look, he treats everybody as a potential thief until receipts are submitted and checked.

*Mujahid Shirazi* is a graduate student in electrical engineering. We all know of his academic difficulties, which for him is an expected suffering in the cause of Islam. To him all situations could be seen as just another example of post-colonial, geopolitical conspiracy against the Muslim *ummah*.

And finally there is *Al-Sheikh Abdussalaam Al-Azahari*, the imam of the community, whose services were donated by one of the Muslim embassies. A sleepy old man, gentle, courteous, and a religious

scholar of few words and, as some members suspect, fewer ideas. He is supposedly linked with some royalty and keeps the committee on its toes by occasionally hinting at a few millions in donation which could be released or held back on the basis of his comments on the good behaviour of the community.

It has taken a faith in the Unseen Divine to keep me alive through this minefield of contradictory and even mutually exclusive voices in an otherwise unanimous committee on the need for a mosque.

### **Assertions, Predictions, and Questions**

- Architecture is simultaneously the story, the stage, and the choreography brought forth by the collective selfhood of an epoch to fulfil its innate drive to make itself known, experienced, and believed.
- Architecture, over a sustained duration of time, is one of the most helplessly candid expressions of culture. Culture is the overall description of those forces and patterns that aid, nourish, and discipline (i.e., cultivate) the individual towards a collective ideal rooted in an internally consistent world-view of society.
- Culture is what people believe. It is what they uphold as essential, valuable, and desirable and how they go about making choices and transactions. Culture encompasses the sources and methods of obtaining knowledge and the manner of its storage, dissemination, and utilization. It is the creative spirit of a people made manifest. In that sense it engulfs all the literary, visual, applied and performing arts, and crafts, folk ceremonies, rites, rituals, fables, legends and myths. In simpler terms the culture of a people is the system of behavioural patterns that lends it a unique identity.
- Architecture stands amongst, and resonates with, the primary instigators and formative forces of culture.
- Architecture is a legitimate medium of philosophical discourse and cultural contemplation. Le Corbusier's "Vers Une Architecture", Venturi's "Complexity and Contradiction", and Hassan Fathy's "Architecture for the Poor" are all architectural testaments posed in words and buildings.
- Culture is the critical protocol in architectural enterprise. No work of architecture can remain aloof from the cultural scrutiny of its own epoch. Nor can it escape the ongoing interpretation and assessment of evolving sensibilities of subsequent times. Lutyen's New Delhi of Imperial India, or Hassan Fathy's Gourni on the upper Nile; Frank Lloyd Wright's "Broadacre City", or Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse; Shahjehan's Taj Mahal in the seventeenth century, or the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C., Niemeyer's Brasilia, or Kahn's Dhaka Capitol, will never cease to inspire architectural questions rooted in cultural aspirations and appropriateness.

- Culture is the higher function of architecture. Rarely do buildings exist in physical isolation or cultural vacuum. If the city stands for the very being of civilization, buildings express discreet intentions towards becoming civilized.
- The global compression, made possible through electronic communications, poses the possibility of civilizational entropy, a grey, undifferentiated, culturally levelled existence. However, it also creates an unprecedented opportunity for refined intercultural differentiation, initiating an epoch of cultural diversity inherently resistant to fascistic outbreaks. Architecture as a major protagonist, as well as culture as a primary formative force of architecture, attains an urgency for those concerned about the future of civilization.
- Architectural “expressiveness” is an attribute of a living civilization: the maturation and harmony of cultures that share the grand views of existence and have resonant beliefs, myths, ethics, and aesthetics.
- Since the contemporary dominant civilization is not from within but from “without” Islam, any desire for “authentic” expressions of Islam remains almost a civilizational goal against which we ought to gauge our state of progress.
- Contemporary architects in pursuit of expressions of Islam in buildings face the challenge of recovering from recent history and discovering the future. To borrow Gaston Bachelard’s metaphor: both the cellar and the attic of mind will need a cleaning.<sup>13</sup> It is in this sense that any “adaptive” approach to architecture should be seen with scepticism because it accepts “the present” as an acceptable starting point.
- Muslims in the non-Islamic West are undoubtedly grounded but not yet rooted. Theirs is a promising exile: a freedom of thought, action, and inquiry that is unknown in the contemporary Muslim world. They are challenged by a milieu that takes pride in oppositional provocations.
- Muslims in the West, especially the ones, who by passage of time, can break away from the inertial ties of national and ethnic prisons, will be the ones who will forge an Islamicity hitherto unexperienced.
- Muslims beyond the Muslim world will discover the essence of Islamic tradition by having the freedom to question the canons of traditional expression.
- Exile, both in the metaphysical and the psychological sense, is the initiation of poetic expression; a significant theme in Attar, Rumi, Jami, and mystical poets. One can safely infer that exile as a state of being, a perceived separation from the centre, will make the expressions of Islam more profound, be they in literature, music, art, or architecture.
- Muslim minorities in the non-Muslim world will ultimately realize that their history has put them in an arena somehow reminiscent of the Makkan period of the Prophet’s life (reminiscent, not

analogous). Their isolation will purify and strengthen their belief; it will refine their thought and make their tools precise. At an appropriate time they will start to send “expressive” postcards home, and there will begin another migration, not in space and time, but from a blindness of a certain kind to a clear vision of another, from spiritless materiality towards expressive spirituality.

#### Notes

1. Lahore is well known for such masterpieces of Islamic architecture as the Badshahi Mosque, Jihangir’s Tomb and Shalimar Gardens.
2. Musalla is a place of Salat (Muslim ritual prayer). Unlike the mosque, a musalla can be “rolled up” and “spread out” at another place. A mosque, once consecrated, cannot be sold or used for another function by the Muslims.
3. “Call to mind also when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the ‘House’ and (having done so), prayed: O Lord, accept this offering from us, it is Thou Who art All-Hearing, All-Knowing.” Quran, Chapter 2, verse 128.
4. A.U. Pope and P. Ackerman, eds., *A Survey of Persian Art and Architecture* (London: Oxford University Press).
5. By this time I had “discovered” the power of architecture to create “artificial surprise” and had started to cite the entrance of the Masjid-i-Shah of Isfahan as a prime example.
6. It was ten years later that I met Professor Aptullah Kuran, a member of the Islamabad mosque jury, and recognized the aberrant imaginations of my student days.
7. I use this phrase with fond memory of a great teacher, Robert LeRicolais, who, in expressing his ideal of structures, spoke of “infinite span zero mass”.
8. In my experience there has been one case where a person brought back from Pakistan a watercolour perspective of the mosque “donated” by his father’s eighty-year-old friend. A gentle suggestion that the proposed design was inappropriate for the site led to an admonition that I had shown cruelty to the pious offering of an old man who might soon meet God and register a complaint against me.
9. The rhetorical question of a “modern minaret”, to the best of my knowledge, was first raised by Professor William Porter at the Aga Khan seminar at Fez, Morocco.



10. The phrase is borrowed with respect and apology from the great Muslim sage Shihab al-Din Yahya al-Suhrawardi who spoke of *al-Ghurbat al-Gharbiyya* (translated by H. Corbin and S.H. Nasr as “occidental exile”) as the state of soul separated from its divine origin. See S.H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 64-68.

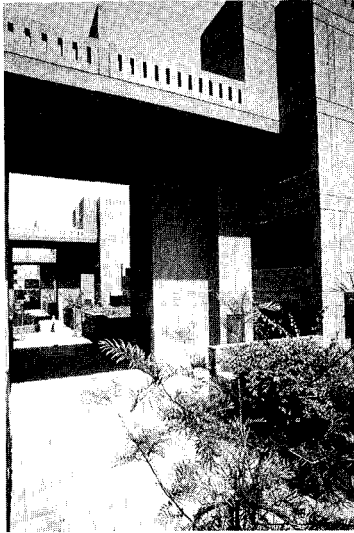
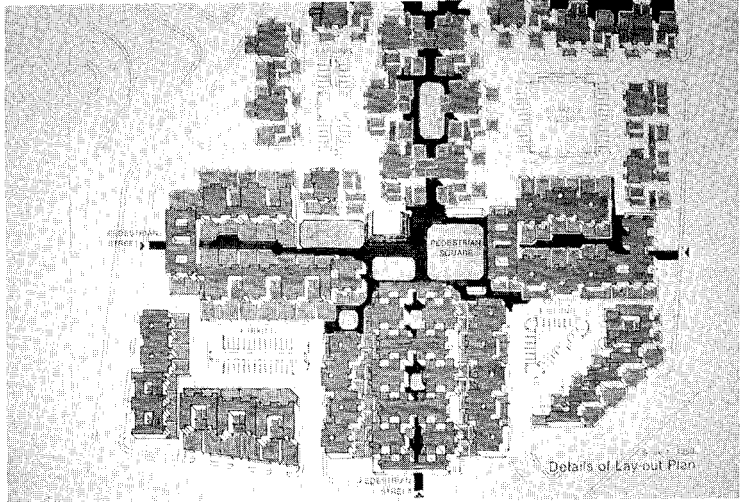
11. Quran, Chapter 6, verse 79.

12. *Al-Batin* (Hidden), *al-Zahir* (Manifest), two of the “Ninety-nine” *Asma’ al Husna* (Beautiful Names of God). Of much philosophical interest through Muslim history, the “Names” are sometimes proposed to be irreducible facets of the Divine Being which may reflect the seeker’s self to himself and thus make possible a gnosis, the cognizance of the destiny by the seeker’s soul. The two names *al-Batin* and *al-Zahir* are of special interest to architects in pursuit of the silent eloquence of space and the quintessential presence of form. For an initiation into the relationship between esoteric philosophy of Islam and its architectural expression, I am indebted to N. Ardalan and L. Bakhtiar, *Sense of Unity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

13. G. Bachelard, *Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

## Comments

Raj Rewal



*Layout plan (top right) of the Asian Games Village showing the evolution of pedestrian pathways. Parking is confined to the periphery. Based on the precedence of the traditional morphology of Jaisalmer, the clusters of the village (top) provide a spine of pedestrian movement and private courtyards, creating a cool and refreshing ambience. The village's entrance doorways (above), darwaza, define semi-public courtyards in the manner of historic cities but are built in the language of contemporary materials.*

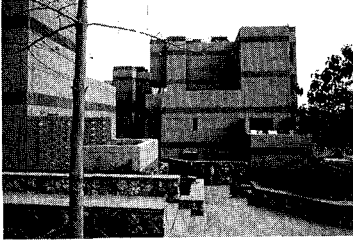
Architectural expression is based on architectural language, which has undergone considerable change during the last century because of new construction materials and different lifestyles. We are now designing buildings for which there are no precedents in our part of the world. Take, for example, genetic engineering laboratories, television studios, and offices equipped with computers: do they imply a complete break with the traditional language of building?

I will try to explain this with four of our building projects, which show how the link with the past is continued in a different language.

**The Asian Games Village** built in 1982 in New Delhi illustrates the idea of change within continuity. The design rejects the false embellishment of reinforced concrete structures with domes, arches, and carvings. Instead, an attempt has been made to reinterpret the traditional morphology of Eastern cities to meet present realities.

We have explored the underlying principles that have relevance for our times. The wisdom of Traditional Architecture concerning climate and community needs has important lessons to teach us for contemporary mass-housing schemes. The city of Jaisalmer with its dense fabric demonstrates the ideas of building cool, shaded, airy structures in a hot dry climate. We have evolved on these principles while designing the low-rise, high-density housing scheme of the Asian Games Village.

The project of **the National Institute of Immunology** for scientific research follows the meticulously functional requirements of laboratories. However, the complex comprising housing for staff and scholars follows the principle of interlinked courtyards with close affinities to historic citadels. Individual buildings and clusters of the complex are built around courtyards of varying scale and functions and are linked to each other through gateways and shaded paths across enclosures with distant vistas and shifting axes. The design evolved from the *havelis* (courtyard residences) and civic

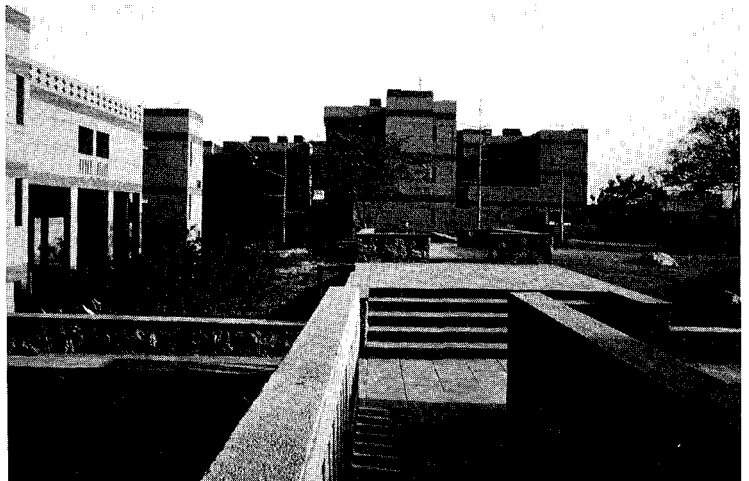


*Plan of the National Institute of Immunology (right) based on a series of interlinked courtyards. The clusters of the institute (above) are built around pathways with shifting axes and distant vistas.*

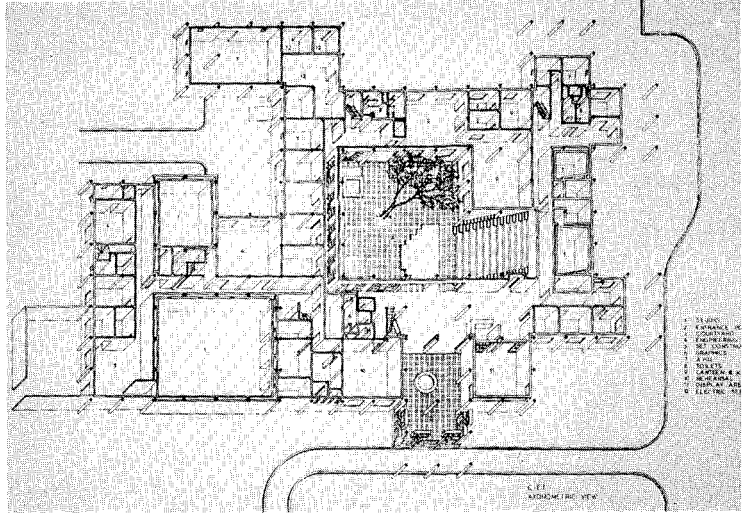


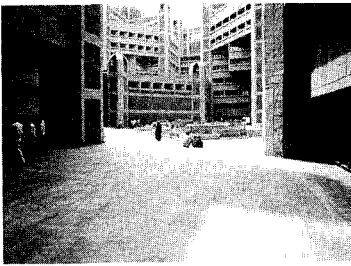
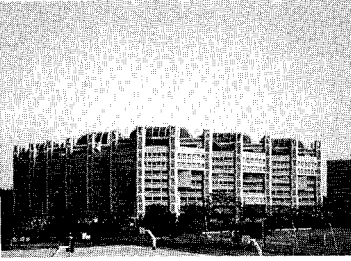
complexes of traditional cities but follows a rational structural system and modern building methodology.

**The Media School in Delhi**, Central Institute for Education Technology, with television studio facilities for educational purposes, carries the conceptual values of madrasahs in a new setting. The entrance courtyard and the central square reflect the principles of traditional educational and religious buildings, but are

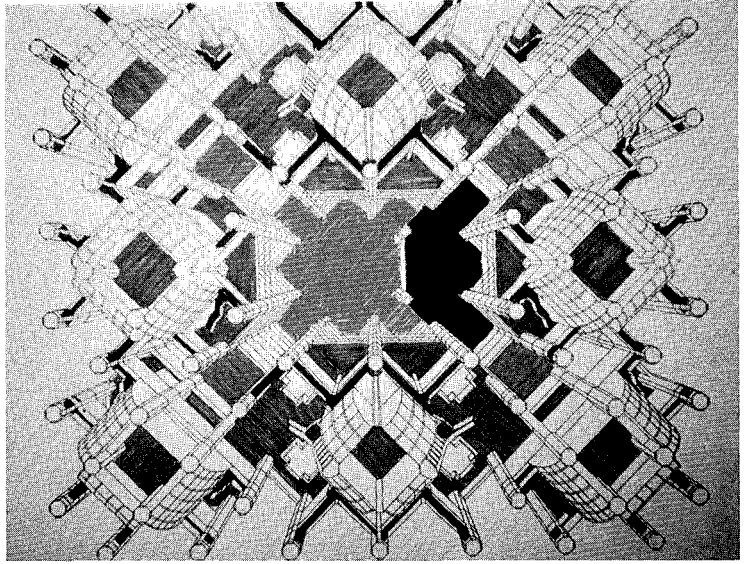


*Communal enclosures of the institute are defined in the manner of traditional havelis. Structural beams are reflected on the façade with red sandstone grit.*





*Bird's-eye view of the SCOPE Complex (top, right) showing a series of internal courtyards at different levels. View of the complex (above, centre) showing interlocking polygonal work spaces supported by a cluster of four columns. View of the internal courtyard (above) of the complex. All photographs, courtesy of Raj Rewal.*



metamorphosed into an entrance foyer and an open-air television studio.

**The SCOPE Office Complex** demonstrates similar principles. It is designed for the large, autonomous, public sector organizations with a working area for 7,000 persons. It is a fully air-conditioned building with all the facilities for computers and electronic gadgetry. However, the form of the building echoes some of the principles learned from the past, of building around courtyards on several levels, to reduce the glare and cut down the cost of air-conditioning.

On the external periphery of the complex, the building mass overhangs on the top floors, obstructing the sun rays and creating deep shadows. But towards the internal protected courtyard, the building recesses at different levels providing protected terraces. The building also follows some of the underlying values of Delhi's polycoloured red and beige historical buildings, without in any way copying their embellishments.

I hope the four building complexes illustrated here draw upon the relevant wisdom of architectural principles established in the past but also attempt to solve truthfully the structural and functional requirements of today. The growth of the techno-industrial basis of our societies has triggered an evolution, and even a metamorphosis, in terms of architectural language.

## Comments

*Darmawan Prawirohardjo*

We are reminded here of the problems still encountered in newly independent Muslim countries and their efforts to develop their countries in harmony with their cultures and the environment.

The statement by Professor Arkoun that Muslim intellectual vitality waned after the twelfth century seems to coincide with the advent of colonization of most of what is now called the Third World countries including the Muslim ones. In the process of colonization most of the cultures, and to some extent the religious communities, lost the ability to transform the Muslim society into a contemporary one without losing its inherent identity, vitality, and self-confidence.

The contention that Muslim space resembles the abode of our *Ruh* within our body wall with only the door to enable people to enter the house is valid only in environments and cultures where such a spatial arrangement lends itself to the desired bodily comfort and the community's concern for privacy.

Understanding and eventually having the ability to find solutions to problems in the multiple cultures within Islam is the challenge facing architects and scholars alike in shaping the new Muslim society and its architecture.

It was said that aesthetism, like religion, is a spiritual experience. It may therefore be quite safe to contend that if a direct intellectual, cultural, and even ritual link can be established between religion and aesthetism, much can be expected in the result of our endeavour to create an architecture that exudes Muslim spirituality.

One case which can be studied closely in the above context is the Balinese culture, which is not based on a Muslim society. There, the integration of the arts and religion is almost total. No important religious ritual of the community is complete without some artistic expression, usually dancing, and no work of art is far from religious significance. The result is a society in which all parts are in harmony with each other and the whole.

The Aga Khan Programme for Architecture has been, and I am sure will continue to be, an important and excellent endeavour to promote the quality of the built environment in the Muslim world. Whilst it has made a significant step in that direction already, it is still possible to do more. Therefore I propose that this programme should expand and take a more activist role in shaping the Muslim world.

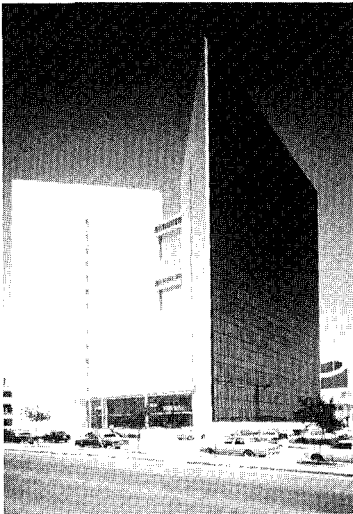
One such new programme could take shape in a social engineering of a Muslim community with the aim of bringing closer together the arts and religion within the context of Muslim philosophy. This may sound blasphemous to many *ulamas*, but if it should yield the desired result, then it would also be our *ijtihad*.

## Comments

*Ali Shuaibi*

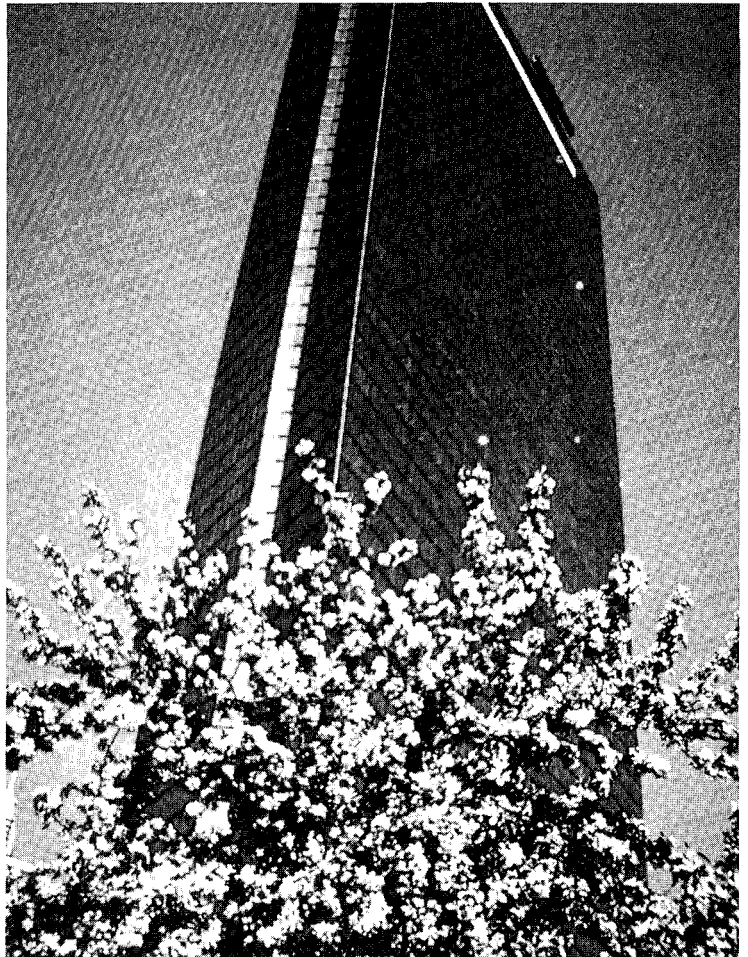
The challenge of architectural design for minority Muslim communities is somehow similar to the challenge of contemporary architectural design in Muslim countries. This situation has arisen because architectural design education in these countries is mostly dissociated from the traditional experience and new traditions have not yet developed. To illustrate the above, I wish to present a synthesis of the issues.

When my colleagues and I at Beeah started our practice in the late seventies, the revision of history began with the works of architects of the early seventies. As an illustration, compare the Al-Khayria Complex in Riyadh by Kenzo Tange with the John Hancock Tower in Boston by I.M. Pei. These designers received the highest honours in international circles. Architecture at that time was reduced to sculptural forms, void of consideration to local climate, materials, resources, urban context, or culture, but relied heavily on engineers to solve most problems.

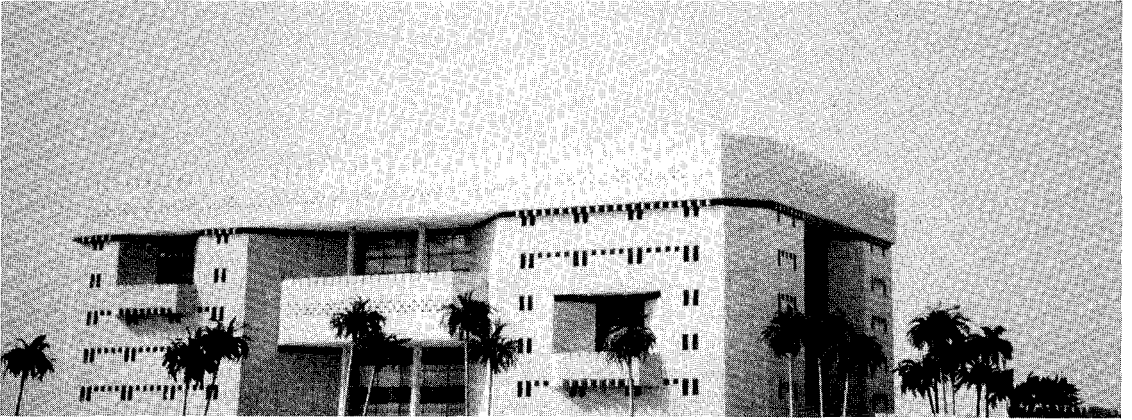


*The Al-Khayria Complex in Riyadh  
Architect: Kenzo Tange  
Photograph: Courtesy of  
Al-Khayria*

*The John Hancock Tower  
in Boston  
Architect: I.M. Pei*





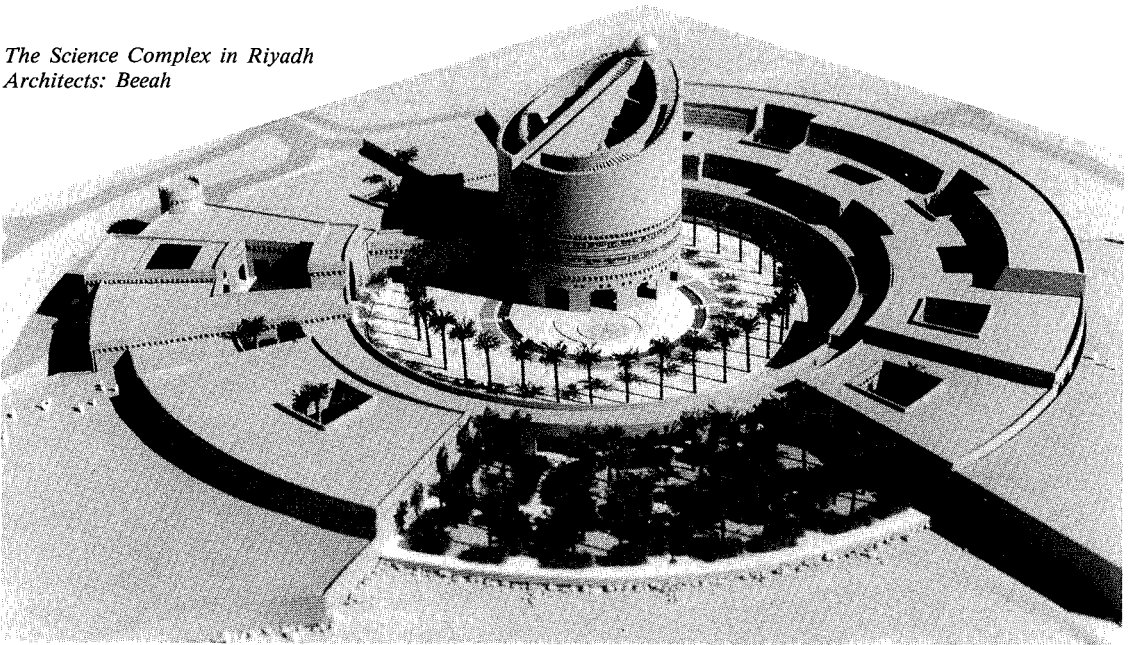


*The General Organization for  
Social Insurance (GOSI) in Riyadh  
Architects: Beeah*

Confronted with that attitude, we felt the need to identify the areas that required serious attention if appropriate architecture was to be achieved, and to look for satisfactory solutions. Four such areas were identified and solutions provided in projects designed by our office.

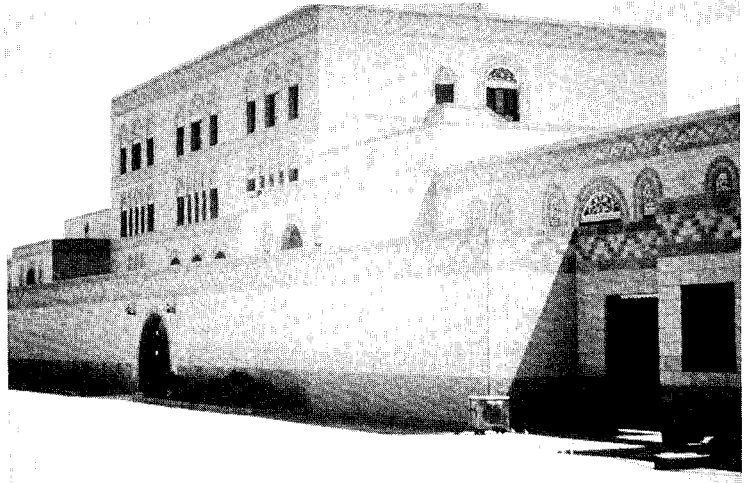
The first was to reconcile the functional aspects of architecture, such as the treatment of climatic factors (e.g., the GOSI offices in Riyadh), or solve social problems, such as the maintenance of large facilities for women by men (e.g., the Girls University in Riyadh).

*The Science Complex in Riyadh  
Architects: Beeah*



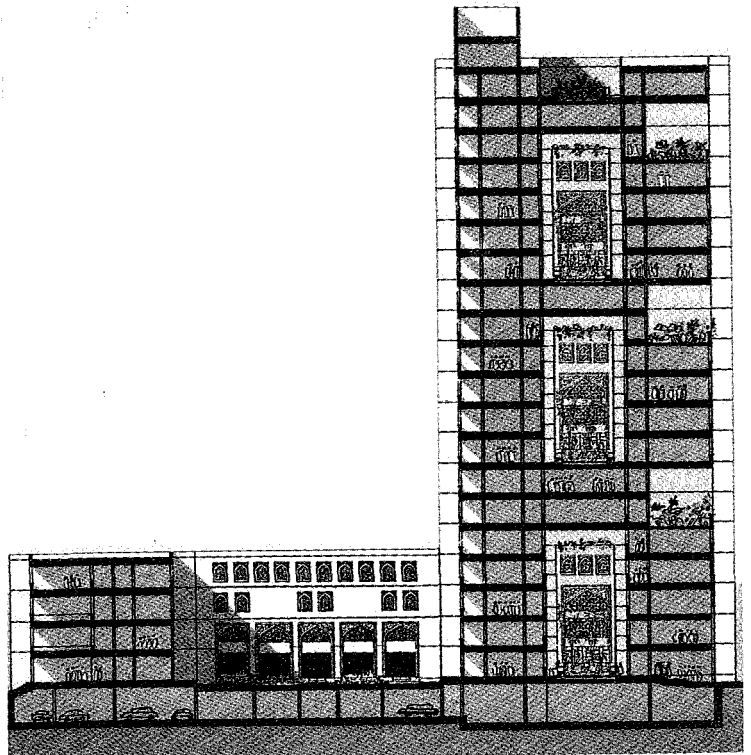


*The Embassy of Saudi Arabia in  
Sana'a, Yemen  
Architects: Beeah*



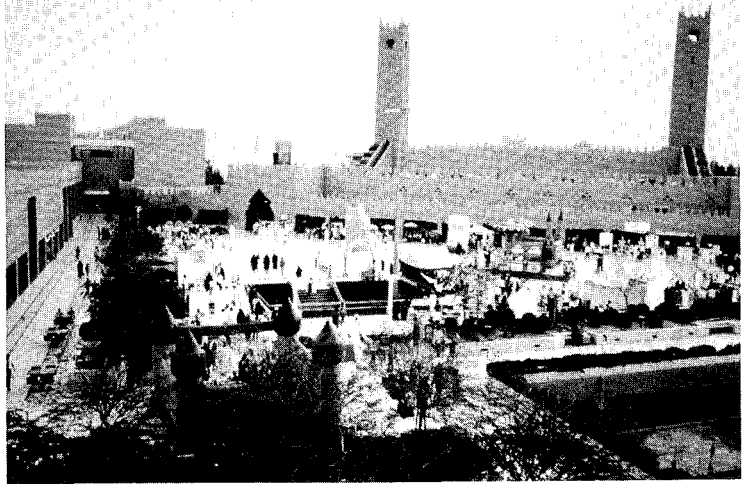
The second area was to emphasize the quality of the space of movement inside the building (e.g., the Science Complex in Riyadh).

The third was to incorporate local arts and crafts in buildings and open spaces (e.g., the Saudi Embassy in Sana'a, Yemen).



*The Sapico Tower, Office Building  
in Islamabad, Pakistan  
Architects: Beeah*

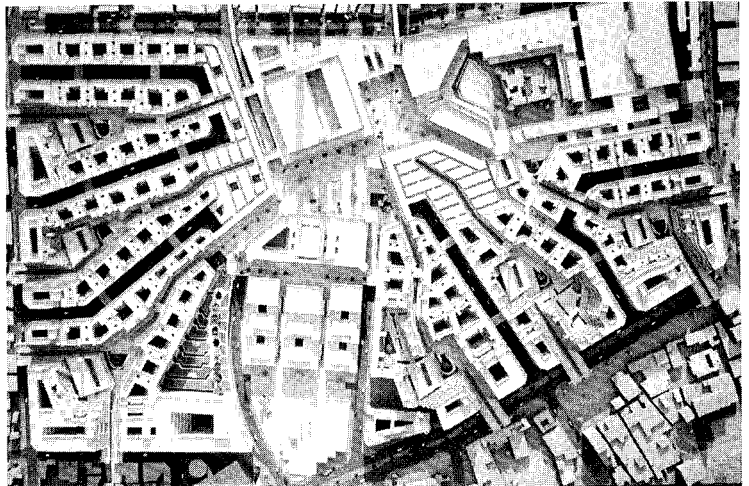
*The Al-Kindi Plaza in Riyadh  
Architects: Beeah*



The fourth was the need to humanize the architecture of tall buildings (e.g., the Sapico Tower in Islamabad, Pakistan).

The first attempts were limited to single buildings or complexes, isolated, by the planners, in suburban settings. They had relatively little social value. So our next step was to deal with the issue of creating the context and fabric that gives a sense of place, time, and purpose in new urban developments, where buildings, instead of competing for attention, would complement each other and the public spaces between them (e.g., the Al-Kindi Plaza in Riyadh). We also had to deal with the issue of humanizing those centres of existing urban areas that had been lost to modern vehicular circulation (e.g., the Justice Palace District in Riyadh).

*The Justice Palace District in  
Riyadh  
Architects: Beeah*



*All photographs, courtesy of Ali  
Shuaibi / Beeah unless otherwise  
indicated.*

## **Discussion**

### **Joseph Prijotomo**

It has become apparent to me that architecture is a means and not an end in itself. From Mr. Khan's and Professor Haider's presentations we gather that Islamic architecture in the West, where Muslims are a minority, is different from Islamic architecture in the Arab world where Muslims are a majority. The experience of the Javanese who converted to Islam shows that Islam did not bring with it Muslim forms (such as the dome) to Java. This allowed the Hindu Javanese to easily convert to Islam without visual obstacles. The same seems to be true in America, as in Professor Haider's presentation we see that the label of Islam is not present in the exterior but in the interior of buildings. I wonder whether this non-Islamic exterior encourages non-Muslims to convert to Islam. If so, then the expression of Islam in buildings should be divided into two types: where Muslims are in the majority, it should reflect their deep and heartfelt attachment to Islam, and where they are in a minority, the expression of Islam should address the peaceful welcome of non-Muslims. As such, architecture may help spread Islam where in a minority or help deepen the faith where Muslims form the majority.

This reflection on architecture as a means coincides with my observations of Islam and Christianity in Indonesia, in Java, and in Flores. In Java, where the Dutch brought with them Catholicism and Protestantism and a church architecture, the Christians are still a minority, while in Flores where no church architecture was introduced, conversion was greater and now this part of East Indonesia is predominantly Christian.

### **Tay Khang Soon**

I appreciate Raj Rewal's remarks about the possibility of continuity from the past, but I want to ask at what point is there a rupture with past traditions, especially in three-dimensional architectural terms and not in cultural or historical terms. In my experience the rupture occurs at a plot ratio of three or five. Anything below a ratio of three or five can use traditional principles and be woven into the fabric of a modern building, but above a ratio of five, a metamorphosis is required and a new approach — there is no choice at all. Of course there are some situations like big span structures which are inherently challenging and cannot be referenced to anything in the past, but those are special cases. However, in housing, high-rise industrial buildings, and high-rise commercial office buildings, once you go beyond a ratio of five, tradition is no longer a specific reference.

### **Ismail Serageldin**

I would like to respond to Tay Khang Soon and say that in certain traditional societies we go much higher than a plot ratio of five

in very traditional idioms. The Yemen is one such place where buildings, even mud-brick constructions, have gone to thirteen storeys high on very narrow plots, and the idiom that they have developed, the traditional idiom, is certainly there. Therefore, I think the problem may be right in many parts of the world but there are certain exceptions that are always present. I would suggest that one of the things that we would benefit from focusing upon is, why are we afraid of the metamorphoses, why are we afraid to innovate? The Muslim rulers who confronted vastly superior cultures when they explored out of Arabia in the seventh century A.D. had no hang-ups about dealing with the best products of these societies. They confronted Greek philosophy and translated it into Arabic and wove it into their fabric and produced a beautiful Islamic philosophy. It was not rejected as being the work of non-Muslims.

It seems to me that we must have the self-confidence to look at the world around us, to hold up a mirror to ourselves and see what is happening, what changes are taking place. We should not seek refuge by attempting to legitimate our actions as architects, by saying that this is a reference to such and such a historical thing. There is nothing wrong in saying this is our *ijtihad*, our proposal to solve a new problem, and as Raj Rewal has pointed out to us, a number of building programmes could never have been conceived forty years ago. And I hope that we do not fall into a trap of feeling that we have to justify everything that we do by a historical reference of authenticity. We should be willing to say occasionally that we did it just because it is beautiful, because adding beauty to the surroundings of people enriches their environment and enables them to live fuller lives. I would therefore appeal to everybody to focus on the question: why is it that we are so concerned about that legitimacy in our space? Can we not find an expression of our faith precisely in this willingness to make the jump and be confident in our faith? To do so would be greater than being locked into particular idioms of architecture or of form.

### **Tay Khan Soon**

I am not familiar with the houses in the Yemen, but I want to use that subject as a starting point to my statement. Quite apart from the intellectual and historical discourse that should be looked into, I find as an architect that all architectural books talk about qualities only. If you look at books on mosques, they tell you about the qualities of different mosques; on housing, they talk about the quality of housing, but there are very few books on architecture which give you the relationship between the qualities talked about and the quantities involved. This is very crucial because our students are being trained without understanding the relationship between quality and quantity. As a result, they cannot make real choices. That we do not always have to look at the past is absolutely correct,

but we do not always have to look at contemporary solutions either. I think that the real choice occurs when you know about the building types and the possibilities of building forms thoroughly. I am afraid our knowledge of building forms is very poor. I have asked, for example, my Indian as well as my Middle Eastern colleagues, what is the ratio between the open to sky space and the closed to sky space they so much talk about. They could not tell me because it has not been measured. This is a problem. I have asked my Indonesian colleagues involved in the Kampung Improvement Programme what is the total floor space per capita, and they could not tell me. I have asked the people in my Housing Board in Singapore what are the alternatives at a plot ratio of 2.5, which is all that they are building. They say there is no alternative but high rise. That is completely wrong. Architects do not know their quantities. They concentrate on philosophies and ideologies, but they do not know their quantities.

I want to make a plea for better documentation. All published work must give basic information such as the total floor area, the site area, the site coverage of open to sky area versus closed to sky, usable circulation areas, etc. because meaningful choices can only be made between traditional forms and new forms when the quantitative aspects of forms are available.

#### **William Lim**

I would like to continue the dialogue of why we are lagging behind. This whole attitude, I think, should be fundamentally examined and changed. I was recently in Prague and there were two things that impressed me in architectural terms. In this city of architectural grandeur, time nearly stood still for the last fifty years. The city is poor and buildings are dilapidated. What is exciting to me is that they have missed out on the worst period of urban planning and development in history. The West is now realizing that it has made tremendous mistakes in the past few decades and it is trying to freeze the situation and let things develop slowly. The Prague experience is what we have in the Third World. The time we have missed out is not important; we should not feel inferior about it because we can make the jump. The theorists both in the East and the West are examining new models. None of the new theories have been crystallized in the East or in the West. People of different religions, disciplines, and nationalities are actually looking at urban situations which are at more or less the same time, same pace, and same stage of development. I would like to stress this point so we can be brave enough to make this quantum jump. We are not behind — in fact, the West has messed up the last decades. I think we should have confidence in ourselves as we are exactly where they are today in terms of knowledge, of experience, and in terms of where we should go from this point.

**Salma Samar Damluji**

To follow up on the point raised by William Lim regarding the case of Prague, and the fact that political isolation has ensured its missing out on the modern architecture construction or phase that took place elsewhere. This is also true in the case of South Yemeni architecture. South Yemen, which was declared a “socialist” state after independence in 1967, was closed off from the rest of Arabia and therefore was prevented from importing the architectural trends of the “capitalist” world. This isolation served the development of traditional architecture in the major towns of the coast and hinterland (namely, outside the capital Aden, which was already subjected to a “modernization” development process prior to independence). In fact, not only did the larger part of Hadramaut, Shabwah, and Yafi not suffer a rupture in their architectural continuity but also in their history for that matter. The people of these areas still proudly maintain their pre-Islamic tribal affiliations within the modern family structure they have adapted to. In brief, while change is evident on a multidisciplinary level in those societies, one can strongly sense that the state of rupture between past culture and present life is absent. This situation, by comparison with the urban and rural fabrics of other countries in the Arab world, is unique. Reinforced concrete was brought into the Hadramaut in the twenties, and used in constructing the modern palaces of elite families who had strong trade and investment ties with Southeast Asia. However, since 1985, house owners have increasingly chosen to have their houses constructed in local materials such as stone and mud-brick. In 1989 the owner of a new palatial five-storey mud-brick house in Sif, told me that building with concrete “does not suit the Hadramaut economically, environmentally, or artistically”. He had lived in a modern villa in Saudi Arabia, from which he had just returned!

Furthermore, we find two interesting architectural phenomena that are worth mentioning. The first is that there is no housing problem outside the capital Aden, owing to the private building sector which continues to operate through a modernized traditional version of the client-master builder formula. (The client may be the government or the individual house owner, while the master builders have themselves incorporated the contractor status for public projects.) In this case the government, where the traditional building sector flourishes, has rarely had to provide for popular housing projects. Secondly, when contemplating the local building technology employed in the region of Upper Yafi, we find in the construction of the traditional stone high rises, seven-storey buildings with stone roof slabs spanning the ceilings throughout, which might be worth considering as very contemporary architecture.

**Syed Zaigham Shafiq Jaffery**

In contemporary Muslim communities such as Pakistan, planning standards that have shaped large government projects persistently ignore the psyche of the Muslim population, which still prefers a spatial organization that “fosters community interaction”. As a result of this tragic change, a new type of hybrid culture is emerging, in which architects play no or very little part and act as facilitators rather than play their own role. The examples of Orangi, Baldia, and Khudaki Basti in Pakistan are a case in point. Even more so, in informal settlements, the continuation of a traditional organization of space and administration is apparent. It is at once meaningful, relevant, and well adapted; it fits in with the lifestyles and priorities of the largest and most rapidly expanding segment of the urban population in Pakistan. Perhaps such a situation exists simply because, here, government interferences have no meaning and the rules and regulations of the master planners, the styles of the educated architects, are on the shelves or gathering dust on the drawing boards.

In our informal settlements, often, as in the past, construction and occupation start with the building of a mosque. The mosque becomes the protector and an insurance against future demolition by the government. As the settlement grows, spontaneous divisions of large areas into identifiable groupings of quarters, streets, and lanes occur. They also become self-governing administrative units. These divisions create intimate human relationships with a decipherable scale, and as Ismail Serageldin would say, create social neighbourhoods responsive to overriding concerns for privacy, for the social space of different population groups, that is, ones that foster community cohesion. Above all, these physical and architectonic groupings also provide owner control of design and content, with minimal government control.

**Arif Hasan**

Zaigham Jaffery spoke of the expansion of informal settlements and the new role of the architect in dealing with them. Informal settlements are the places where major expansion is taking place and contemporary urban space is being defined. For the architect to play a positive role in this development, a role as a facilitator has been proposed. In order to fulfil that role, architectural education has to be restructured and a greater stress placed on creating for the environment. These factors are social, economic, administrative, and, above all, political. There are no axioms or books for this education so far and it can only be acquired in the “field”. More difficult than being a facilitator is the role the architect must play to get the state to accept the concept of development through facilitation. This calls for a larger understanding about how governments function. Indonesia is one country where architects, academic institutions, and government agencies are involved —

through the Kampung Improvement Programme. I feel it is important that any literature about it be translated and made available to academic institutions in other countries to help them develop directions in dealing with informal settlements.

### **Syed Zaigham Shafiq Jaffery**

It is obvious that the role of the architect in Muslim communities must change. His education and his visions must be readjusted. In fact, if architecture as a profession is to continue to exist meaningfully, this role must now drastically change. And if this change does not occur soon, the architect as a professional will become redundant, unnecessary, and useless for the vast majority of the inhabitants of this planet in general, and for those in Muslim communities in particular.

Today, we continue to give a very minuscule percentage of our national population their vision, ignoring the impact of our actions on the vast majority. The change must come from within and with conviction. We have to design with people rather than for them. We must build what people enjoy and not what we would want them to enjoy. In fact, professionals, rather than bureaucrats, can play an important role in ascertaining user needs and desires and incorporating them into the design process so that they are in tune with the needs of Muslim communities.

### **Hasan Poerbo**

Talking about architectural space on an urban scale is in essence to talk about the processes of the utilization of land as an urban resource. This cuts across the problem of poverty, since more and more of the urban poor have no access to this resource. Mr. Jaffery and Mr. Hasan have talked about the role of the architect and the organization of space at the urban level. In developing countries such as Indonesia, for instance, the role of the architect as the creator of urban space as a built environment is limited. At the most only 10 percent or even less is directly attributed to his services. This is perhaps an outcome of his education; inadvertently he is trained to be effective only if he deals with a clearly identifiable, usually wealthy, client. But when in reality he has to deal with poor communities which are not organized to employ architects, he is at a loss as to how to make himself useful. His social effectiveness as a professional is thus limited.

To enhance his role as an architect in developing countries, his education should therefore include an understanding of land management and conflict management between the actors involved in utilization of land as a resource, informal processes in urban development, and organization of communities as a client system which he can serve.



These requirements will become even more important in the future as more and more donors and banks such as IBRD ask to use community-based development approaches, especially in cases which involve poor communities. For that reason architects should also have a knowledge of participatory approaches in planning, design, and development.

#### **Aziz Esmail**

In general I am in agreement with what has been said by Ismail Serageldin and then by Arif Hasan about the need of not being shy of change, and the futility of a defensive posture, or a posture of retreat. But I do have one point on which I disagree with Dr. Serageldin and I have sympathy there for the other side of the discourse. I do not think the comparison with the period of interaction, or encounter of Islamic civilization with Greek philosophy, applies today. On the spur of the moment, I can think of at least four differences and there are probably more. One is that in the historical case Muslim civilization encountered an extinct culture, not a living culture, because the original Greek society was by then a bygone fact of history. Secondly, the encounter was a textual one, a literary rather than a social convergence, precisely because of the fact that it was extinct. Thirdly, the impact of Greek thought was on a very limited social circle, namely, the intellectual elite who were literate and who could understand philosophy. Fourthly, there was at that point no fossilization of Muslim tradition either, because it was still in its formative phase. None of those factors apply today. The Western world is an all too living presence. It has encroached on various parts of the Third World in very direct ways, sometimes indeed in a violent way. One must therefore sympathize with the other side of the discourse. To that is the added complication that the Islamic world itself in many areas has a fossilized tradition of its own.

There is undoubtedly the need to leap forward, I agree, a need for innovation, but one has to appreciate the difficulties that stand in the way. The relationship between Islam and the West today — whether aggressive or defensive — is partly complicated by the very concepts of “Islam” on the one hand, and the “West” on the other. Why do we use these rather than other concepts? And what do they exactly mean? So long as we formulate the problem by indiscriminate use of the term “West”, we are in fact conceding to the West’s idea of itself. We might do well to ask ourselves the question: when in the history of the West did the concept of the “West” arise? Is this idea something that we should accept today? Indeed, the case we happen to be discussing now, that of Greek philosophy, is very interesting because Greece, as we know, is today considered part of the West. Where, however, does the line of longitude that divides the West from the East run, and why should it run there

and nowhere else? What historical sense does it make? As we know, some of the intellectual sources of the so-called West are also the sources of the Islamic tradition, and if we really examine the whole concept of the West, we may be in a better position, perhaps, to start to be free from an aggressive dependency on the Western world itself. I think that is the way to go. Perhaps the best place for people to initiate these terminological reconsiderations are Muslims living in the West itself, as the “climate” in many other countries tends to inhibit a free and critical debate on these kinds of issues.

### **Mohammed Arkoun**

Aziz Esmail has just mentioned that the reasons for relating Greek thought to the West are questionable. I agree that the cultural geography opposing the “West” to the “East” is irrelevant. But one must recognize at least two major identifiable “mental spaces” commanded by two different logics and conceptions of law.

Aristotelian logic has imposed for twenty-four centuries the principle of identity and the third “excluded” position: if A is B and A is not C, B cannot be C. We know the impact of syllogistic reasoning on Islamic, Jewish and Christian reasoning, and on Western reasoning after the sixteenth century. We are not yet free from this logic strengthened by a rhetoric, in spite of the discovery of a plural logic and plural mathematics.

Similarly, Roman law has imposed a positive concept of law from which a positive law not related to any revelation or divine origin has been developed in the “West”, especially after the eighteenth century.

On the other hand, we have a logic based on the possibility of including a third position in an undecided space between A and B. This is illustrated in Buddhist thought and refers to the other mental space, in which a reference to a divine origin of law is also dominant.

These two mental spaces are not to be found exclusively in the so-called “West” and the so-called “East”. Islamic thought has occupied an intermediate position as shown with philosophers and theologians (*Mu'tazilites*) on one side, and jurists and Ishraqi thought and Sufi experience of the divine on the other.

### **Ismail Serageldin**

One aspect of the behaviour of the earlier Muslims was precisely their boldness and lack of confinement within a particular intellectual or physical space. It is this kind of openness and *ijtihad* that I think we should carry over from that period. I agree fully with Aziz Esmail about the difference between that period and the present one, but we always measure ourselves to “others”. Mohammed Arkoun has invited us to deconstruct and analyze modernity as well as tradition,

the West as well as the Muslim world. I think we are making a start at it and I hope that architects will not be inhibited from presenting their own *ijtihad*, saying we are confronting a new problem, which requires a new solution. A Hadith tells us that going from Medina to Yemen in the very life span of the Prophet, a Messenger of the Prophet was encouraged to use *ijtihad* in confronting whatever new situations there might be. Now that spirit is what we should carry with us in our debates here, fourteen hundred years later, in a world of micro-computers and immunology and high-rise structures and complexes that have seven thousand workers in one place, all requiring new architectural solutions to be evolved. There is no need to borrow from elsewhere, but our own architects could evolve within the context of our own culture as we understand it to be with a boldness that could help create a tomorrow rather than trying to lock ourselves in the past. This is a plea but I think it is very much in the spirit of the whole theme of the seminar, of contemporary expressions of Islam in buildings. Contemporary expressions can be found also in this willingness to innovate.

**Syed Zaigham Shafiq Jaffery**

Many Muslim countries such as Pakistan, for instance, eagerly embrace and adopt indiscriminately the cultural standards, norms, and nuances of their former colonial masters. Economic linkages have brought development packages calling for a transfer of technology, an imposition of expertise and experts from the Western donors. Eager to please and happy at being “assisted”, we continue to let economic and cultural subjugation continue in new “honeyed” forms. The methods may have changed but the end result, though camouflaged adroitly, is the same. Subjugation continues in another form through more subtle, but equally powerful methods. In many cases the ruling elite and the practising architects are Western-trained “brown sahibs” who hold their own traditions in contempt and disdain — in effect the faces have changed but the attitude and mentality are still alien. Independence and a change of flags on the flagpoles, therefore, did not necessarily mean that “intellectual decolonization” had also been achieved. The result has been obvious. Dr. Soedjatmoko, an Indonesian philosopher, has called it a loss of sense of style, a loss of criteria, and a loss of aesthetic integrity!

After independence, if this “Soedjatmokon loss” continues to be perpetuated, as indeed it has, then the ruling elite in Muslim countries is equally and understandably guilty of not establishing the required sense of direction or re-establishing Islamic aesthetic integrity. Uncritically when we accepted and welcomed Western concepts of “progress” and “modernization”, we relegated our own heritage and tradition to the dungeons of apathy and critical neglect. Not only are we embarrassed by our past but by allowing the indiscriminate expansion of Western design concepts, we have

ourselves threatened, and in some cases become a party to, the destruction of the Muslim environment.

**Dogan Kuban**

We have been aware of this decay for a long time, but it is not only in architecture and aesthetics, it is a total decay. It is an intellectual, economic, cultural, and high technological decay. So we should not really have this feeling of guilt. We have to try to understand, as Professor Arkoun suggested, why this has happened. I think we have to examine ourselves; this is the most important thing. We have neglected self-criticism. I believe that only by questioning history and redefining Islam can we find solutions, architectural or nonarchitectural. Otherwise we are stuck and will remain stuck. We cannot go back and try to understand Islam and what was said in the Middle Ages; we have to start to write our history again.

**Raj Rewal**

I think there has been only one real question posed: when does rupture occur? I think this is a very important question. And I think perhaps the rupture occurred a long time ago when we were conquered, when most of Asia was colonized. And I think it was at that point really when we should have started thinking, where and how we went wrong and allowed ourselves to be conquered by outsiders. I think the architectural expression which stems from that is a very serious one because the colonial attitude towards us and consequently our own attitude towards ourselves have been at the base of a certain loss of vitality. I think we have to recover that vitality. How do we do it? I do not know; it is a very difficult question to answer in words and it has to be dealt with in our works. It has been mentioned that after five storeys there is a disruption. Now I can perhaps say that it could be even at one storey that disruption occurs, because it is a question of definition. If you consider typologies, you may be right, but if you consider attitude, then I think it is a totally different thing. The question of disruption and metamorphosis is very closely aligned, and I think we have to find an answer in terms of physical work, as it cannot be defined in words.

**Syed Zaigham Shafiq Jaffery**

In Pakistan and almost all Muslim societies there still remains an active traditional building system but only in isolated pockets. It is scorned by officialdom, derided by professionals, and is generally disappearing under the onslaught of “modernism”. The current state of events in Pakistan’s urban centres is a direct result of this loss. The assault is complete and uncompromising. The circularity is being

ruptured, the squares have been disbanded, and the hexagons termed uneconomic. The linear division of Islamabad, for example, stratifies people according to the office they hold in government services. Even shopping places are divided. Tucked away on the borders of the city, at the mountain's edge, rather than in its centre, the Dalokay Mosque paid for by King Faisal of Saudi Arabia communes more with the greying Margalla Hills than with the people of the city. Even though it was built by a Muslim, it fails to inspire and negates principles basic to the Islamic tradition. For many, it has become a place for a picnic rather than for prayer.

On another plane, we have the Bhong Mosque, every inch of whose surface is covered by lavish decoration, ornamenting the entire complex. An Aga Khan Award to this mosque acknowledges that it has an immense significance for ordinary people, even if many architects might hate it. Though quite a few architects have criticized the decision of the Award, the Bhong Mosque has more meaning than the concrete spaceship Columbia, a fantasy in concrete, at Margalla, ready to take off. To experience the Bhong Mosque you have to experience the dirt, the flies, and the dusty streets of Rahimyar Khan in order to appreciate the peace, the quiet, and the visual feast of the mosque's interior and exterior courtyards. The steps that rise from the dusty streets are steps that help you transcend from the temporal to the permanent. Such an experience is actually a change in the state and the frame of mind, from materialism to spiritualism. Completed over thirty years, Bhong represents a storehouse of symbols and forms for the masses who search for familiarity and moorings in a rapidly changing world over which they have no control. They search for their identity. They visit and internalize these visual symbols to rise above the mundaneness of everyday existence. It is, after all, the House of God and therefore eternal while the plain simplicity of the surrounding houses built for humans is temporal and prone to disappear tomorrow.

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**Expressions of Islam in Buildings:  
The Indonesian Experience**

*Yuswadi Saliya*

*Hariadi*

*Gunawan Tjahjono*

**Discussion**

*Gulzar Haider, Sam Hall Kaplan, Abdelhalim*

*I. Abdelhalim, Gunawan Tjahjono, Jale Erzen, Hariadi,*

*Hasan-Uddin Khan, Gunawan Tjahjono, Asaduz Zaman,*

*Gunawan Tjahjono, Hugh O'Neil, Rasem Badran, Hariadi*

# **Expressions of Islam in Buildings: The Indonesian Experience**

*Yuswadi Saliya  
Hariadi  
Gunawan Tjahjono*

## **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

Every society has its own interpretation of a universal religion, such as Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, or Buddhism, and the members of that society behave according to the interpreted “rules of conduct” that derive from the respective scriptures. Every religion marks out the landscape of a society with distinct features, such as houses of worship, shrines, and pilgrimage places. These religious buildings express the society’s religious images which are formulated through a frame of reference dominated by a cultural core of world-views, ethics, and beliefs. As these images change, new expressions may take place in accordance with the availability of materials, methods, technology, managerial skills, and labour. Also, the choice of a particular shape is sanctioned by the value system of the decision-makers and of the builders in a given society.

However, religious conduct, especially that of a newly adopted religion, seldom transforms the existing settlement patterns. Social conduct often adjusts to, and fits into, the established pattern. On the other hand history shows us that political decisions, economic policies, and technological innovations play significant roles in changing settlement patterns. As such, Islam as the religion of the Indonesian majority appears to present no exception.

This paper will focus primarily on specific cases in Central Java, and touch briefly on a few cases elsewhere. It will disclose the decision-making process behind some important elements of a mosque, and illustrate the way the building is used to accommodate Islamic conduct. Although the examples selected cannot be used for a generalized formula, as they represent a partial view of Indonesian culture, the writers believe the process underlying those cases may have resonance in other parts of Indonesia as well.

The first part provides a brief account of the issues of continuity and change. These issues are not conceived as contradictory, but rather as complementary aspects in a continuum of activities. The second part concerns itself with some cases in Central Java where the evolution of Javanese landscape during the spread of Islam is examined to illustrate the framework discussed.<sup>2</sup> The final part raises key issues and presents the point of view of the writers on contemporary expressions of Islam in buildings.

## **Continuity and Change: A Theoretical Perspective**

This section attempts to discuss the changes in a number of environments relating to the Muslim community in Indonesia. In this discussion, these changes are seen as corresponding to both spiritual and nonspiritual activities of the community. These environments will be examined from the perspective of continuity and change, including the notions of syncretism, a process in which elements of the old and the new are combined. Within this perspective, two elements of culture will be identified: the cultural core that resists change or changes very little and the peripheral

elements that change very fast. In order for cultural syncretism to occur, supportive environments should be provided, usually of a socio-cultural and physical nature.

The core culture of the relevant group will be discussed, originating from the definition of culture itself. On the one end, world-view is considered as an abstract definition of culture and, on the other end, activity system is the operational definition of it. Usually lifestyles and activity systems constitute the core culture of a group, with activity systems directly related to the physical environments: natural or built. In other words, activity systems relate to the system of settings. These two systems correspond to each other showing the specific characteristics of the group.

Within this perspective, the changes of environments will be discussed by using some examples from different locations and periods. These examples include environments with different types and scales, from settlements with different scopes to components of building. It is hoped that this attempt will show the continuity and change in the environments of the Muslim community in Indonesia.

### **The Notion of Cultural Syncretism**

There are different phenomena of change. Many factors characterize change, one being the rate of change. Some are evolutionary while others are rapid. A rapid cultural change often results in the negative, e.g., stressful experiences for many people. One reason is that there is no modulation of the rate of change. In this situation people are not able to adapt to the changing environments smoothly.

Unlike rapid changes, gradual changes allow people to adapt. Here the pace of change enables the process of syncretism to occur, resulting in a creative synthesis between the old and the new. The combination of elements makes for a gradual process that helps people experience a smooth change, and increases their ability to overcome environmental pressures.

The syncretic process includes changes in two types of environments: physical and nonphysical. Socio-cultural environments are examples of nonphysical entities that change continuously. Then there are the changes of physical environments or settings that correspond to them. The task is to identify which elements of the old are still retained and which are abandoned.

Methodologically, tracing these changes includes both longitudinal and cross-sectional approaches. One could look at changes in the same environment from time to time. On the other hand, one also could look at different environments of a similar nature which were built at different times but that still exist and then trace the changes. The first approach would be very time consuming if observation for the future were included. Although there are some limitations, the second approach could solve this problem.





*Rituals relating to lifestyles, social interaction and food habits are well represented in this view (top) of daily activities in an alley between houses in Yogyakarta. The gate of the Taman Sari Royal Garden complex (above) leading to the gate of the One-Post Mosque.*

### The Need for Supportive Environments for Cultural Change

It is important to modulate the rate of change to provide time for the syncretic process to occur, and, consequently, avoid abrupt changes that could result in negative consequences for the people. Modulating the rate of change can be enhanced by the availability of environments that support the change. Examples can be drawn from the physical as well as nonphysical elements of environments, such as social networks, traditional institutions, ritual activities and their corresponding settings or physical environments.

However, we should be aware that these environments are not only supportive but sometimes also inhibiting. Thus, there should be some way to enhance their supportiveness while at the same time reducing their inhibiting characteristics. In this case, one should be very careful in identifying what relevant group is being supported, especially its cultural core. Secondly, one should also identify the specific characteristics of the supportive environments, whether social or physical, or both. Lastly, consideration should be given to the mechanisms that enable the process to occur.

To conclude, sets of aspects should be considered for any group being studied. The first concerns itself with the *cultural core* of the group, e.g., lifestyles, behaviour, activities, language, food habits. Members of this group interact with each other or members of other groups, requiring *units of social interaction* for them. These interactions and activities are in accordance with the *institutions* of the group with their highly specific cultural activities (e.g., rituals). This leads to the specific building and its components and the *systems of settings* of the group.

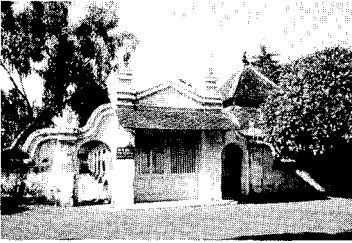
### Observation Notes

#### The Mosque

Early Javanese mosques have a square plan with the building standing on a raised massive floor covered by a multilevel roof that ends in a point. There are four main posts supporting the upper roof. The mosque proper is either surrounded or extended in the front by a roofed veranda called *serambi*. A mosque and its *serambi* are encircled respectively by water, open space, and an enclosing wall.<sup>3</sup>

In some cases, such as those of the mosque complex of a *Wali* (Saint) or of a state founder, this wall extends to cover a cemetery complex which is often located right behind the mosque.<sup>4</sup> The tomb of the most significant figure is often on the axis of the mosque, but usually faces south. In this way the ancestor, who was traditionally respected, would be indirectly venerated during the prayer.<sup>5</sup> And the cemetery often becomes a pilgrimage centre.

In addition, the door of an early Javanese mosque faces east and the direction of prayer is oriented towards the west. Although this east-west axis can rarely be found in recently built mosques, it is interesting to observe that such an idea continues in a small mosque



*Gate (top) and interior (above) of the One-Post Mosque. The single post with its four branches and four corners, represents a structural abstraction of the nine walis who helped spread Islam in Java. Exterior view of the One-Post Mosque (below).*

built in the 1970s in the Taman Sari Royal Garden complex. Designed by the renowned Javanese architect Mintobudoyo, this mosque is covered by an upper roof supported by one post at the mosque geometrical centre, instead of by the traditional four main posts. The architect intended to express the religious realm through oneness. This single post has four branches to support the four corner beams of the upper roof. In this way the images of the nine *Walis* (Saints), who are significant to the spread of Islam in Java, were abstracted into the main structural elements: one major post, four branches, and four corners. The architect told one of the writers that the orientation of the mosque was intentional. To him a Javanese mosque should face east, and any deviation would violate the Javanese rule. He would rather resign than be forced to follow the direction of Mecca in designing his mosque. His request was accepted and the mosque was built according to his original plan. This instance shows that a master builder is respected, for he controls the knowledge of the traditional values of the society.

Of those aforementioned features, the square plan, raised floor, and walled enclosure can be found in the structure of remaining Hindu-Javanese temples. The one-point multilevel roof is a common element of the Balinese Meru, which existed in Java prior to the domination of Islamic culture. The encircling water is an adaptation of a moat, which recalls the Javanese cosmology in which the central continent Javadvipa was enclosed by a ring of ocean. The application of this image can be found in Javanese palaces.

*Serambi*, which serves social activities such as wedding ceremonies, can be seen as an effort to separate secular activities from spiritual practices that take place in the mosque proper. The tradition of having a *serambi* in front of the mosque proper continues in many recently completed mosques which are initiated and sponsored by the community, such as those at Bantul and Kota Gede. This practice suggests that some Javanese still consider that prayer is a sacred activity and that a place for prayer deserves special attention.





*In the densely populated kampungs of the inner city of Yogyakarta, mosques often consist of simple huts where prayer takes place alongside other daily activities.*

Some of the mosques in densely populated kampungs of the inner city of Yogyakarta have none of the above-mentioned features. These mosques appear similar to simple huts. They have a unique function, however, as a setting for the extension of the daily activities of the surrounding residents. Because their houses are crowded, people use the open space outside their homes. This indirectly incorporates all the public activities of the kampungs including religious events. Examples would include guard posts, open spaces, overhangs of neighbouring houses, paths, warungs, and the mosques. In the case of the mosque in Kampung Ratmakan, the yard is not only at times used as a badminton court, but also as a place for hanging clothes, cooking, and raising chickens.

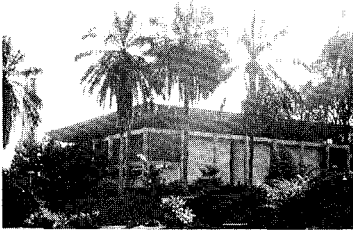
An additional element, a miniaturized dome, appears in some new mosques in Kota Gede and its surroundings. The dome has been associated with the mosque in many parts of the world including Indonesia. However, a dome has seldom been used in the interior of the main body of a roof in many recently built Javanese mosques. A miniaturized dome is employed as a crown the use of which should be celebrated. Adopting a strong new element that can enrich the image while maintaining the existing referential framework would seem to be a wise Javanese resolution. The dome as a new sign is not part of interior design in South-Central Java.

In the Javanese context, heaven and wholeness have been represented by the one-point pyramidal roof, which suggests a strong central power commanding its four quarters. Both pyramid and four quarters with a centre are related to spatial archetypes, the archaic image in the human unconscious. These images will reappear in the conscious mind and take an ordered shape at a certain moment. "Archetype", a term used in Jungian psychology, has been elaborated on by Mimi Lobell.<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that any new mosque whose construction is funded by the foundation of Amal Bakti Islam Pancasila, a government-sponsored organization, is based on a model

*A traditional three-level Javanese roof has been used at the Jakarta International Airport.*

*Architect: Andreu  
and Wirjomidjojo  
Photo: G. Otte/AKAA*





*The Salman I.T.B. University Mosque at Bandung. Flat-roofed mosques are relatively rare in Indonesia. They usually reflect the architect's Western training.*

*Architect: A. Noe'man  
Photograph: H.-U. Khan/  
AKAA*

derived from the traditional Javanese mosque with a three-level roof. A dome-like structure would appear to be discouraged by this official foundation. Perhaps this is a way to resist change and to retain cultural identity amidst the challenge of other images for a mosque such as that of a dome or a flat roof.

Examples of flat-roofed mosques without domes are relatively rare. This phenomenon began in big cities such as Jakarta (Arief Rachman Hakim, 1968-1970; Sunda Kelapa, 1970-72) and Bandung (Salman, 1974). These mosques were designed by architects who were educated under the modern Western architectural training system at the time the flat roof was associated with function. Flat-roof mosques in Indonesia were less popular than dome-topped mosques. Domes and multilevel pyramidal roofs are associated with mosques in the minds of the common people.

However, this flat-roof type appears to be also accepted in certain parts of Kota Gede. The community in the Jagalan district of Kota Gede has just completed a flat-roofed mosque in order to become "modern".<sup>7</sup> This phenomenon is worth studying. Is it a new, partially accepted image of modernity conceived by some members of Muslim society in Kota Gede or is it a temporary phenomenon?

### Houses and Housing

The spatial arrangements of a mosque and a *serambi* can be related to a typical ideal Javanese house, which consists of an initial *hōuse*, *omah*, and an open-roofed hall, *pendapa*. *Omah* was a sacred domain for it contained the abode of the rice goddess Sri, called *senthong tengah*, which was located at the back of the house centre. This sacred spot could be seen by the public only during certain events such as a wedding ceremony. Many houses in Kota Gede today use *senthong tengah* for prayer, which indicates that the archaic concept of the sacred domain remains important to some Javanese. They retain its original function but also use it for other purposes.

*Pendapa*, on the other hand, is used for public activities such as ritual performances and social gatherings. It is open to the public most of the times. Religious feasts often take place in this area. In such religious events, various parts of the house, except *senthong tengah*, are used. In the backyard a cow and goats are slain. Their carcasses are brought to the *pendapa* to be processed and distributed to the poor by male volunteers. Female volunteers cook in the backyard for all the participants. Meal preparation seldom occurs in the central zone defined by the four main posts. In this functionally inefficient way, religious conduct is fitted into the existing building.

It is interesting to compare the spatial quality of the mosque proper to that of an *omah*, as both are governed by darkness, opaqueness, and mystery. On the other hand, the spatial quality of the *serambi* and the *pendapa* are dominated by brightness, openness, and transparency. Thus, mosque and house share similar concepts in spatial arrangements and visual expressions, which suggests that a similar image framework was employed in the Javanese building code.

A high wall characterizes the street scene of inner Kota Gede. The physical appearance of a house is blocked out by the wall. The wall unifies the street scene and creates an image of social equity and a sense of safety. At the time when a girl was confined to the *pingit* (isolated) norm, the wall effectively protected the girl from being seen by strangers.

Most houses in Kota Gede face south, the direction of the South Sea Goddess. Cardinal directions are assigned certain meanings which prescribe correct behaviour. The Javanese world-view emphasizes that a person behave according to his relative position within the surrounding environment. A person should understand his position whenever he goes to a strange place. In so doing he needs to acquire a profound knowledge of directions. This knowledge seems to be a natural outcome of an instructive environment in which everybody knows that south is the direction he faces right at the moment he leaves the house. West is the direction towards which he prays, and north is the direction of his first encounter during a prayer.

One distinct feature of the housing pattern in Kota Gede is the shared gate at the walled boundary between neighbours. Through this gate one can easily enter the yard of one's neighbour without going to the street. These gates intensify interaction, promote tolerance, suggest cooperation and harmony, and facilitate emergency exit in a critical situation such as fire and war. Tolerance and harmonious interaction are aspects of Islamic brotherhood. Shared gates also reduce the privacy of a house.



*The Great Mosque of Demak, a perfect example of commonly shared symbols, has been the inspiration for the standardized mosque designs built throughout Indonesia. Exterior view (top) and interior prayer area (above).*

*All photographs, courtesy of G. Tjahjono, unless otherwise indicated.*

## Discussion

The writers would like to discuss some key issues, which are considered to be most pertinent and basic in terms of their contribution to the transformation of architectural expressions. They are not exhaustive accounts, as each has its own limitations and validity, and are therefore open to discussion.

- It has been shown that members of a community arrange their built environment to accommodate their daily activities in full accordance with social and spiritual requirements. Traditionally, since “pre-Islamic” times, people included the built environment as part of the *enculturation (institutionalization) process*, i.e., the process of introducing the living culture to the younger generation. Architecturally speaking, the most pertinent is the notion or awareness of *orientation* both spatially and socially, the notion of a *sacred-profane* continuum, *pure* and *impure*, of *hierarchical order* in space, of *good* and *bad* direction, etc. As far as the architectural transformation is concerned, the spread of Islam proceeded without disturbing the existing built environment. In the first phase of the Islamicization process, however, the Muslims made new interpretations by designating new functions and meanings to old structures or buildings. Thus, the *West* was then named *qibla* (direction to Kaaba), and had to be respected as it was the direction for the head and not for the feet (re: the symbolic meaning of *caste*).

The preservation of the cardinal directions for a mosque is an example of how, during the early stage of Islamicization, a compromise by the new religion was made. This may signify the role of the dominant *political power* in enforcing the placing of a mosque in front of an *alun-alun* (public square).

- In the later phase of Islamicization, however, the *qibla* prevailed. It may characterize the building among other masses which usually follow the east-west direction to minimize exposure to the sun. Now, the politico-economic factor shows its dominating power: the birth of the *official style* represented by the standardized design of mosques subsidized by the Amal Bakti Islam Pancasila Foundation. This reminds one of the Great Mosque of Demak which was inspired by *wantilan* structures, i.e., a religious building erected originally to accommodate a Hindu ritual, generally believed to be its source. The spread of the standardized design to all parts of Indonesia, for better or for worse, may have its own impact on the people at large. It may form a common cognition of how a mosque should look, namely, in terms of communally shared symbols.
- On the other hand, the thrust to formulate a certain *style*, an *image*, better known (but not necessarily a clearer concept) as *identity*, as part of the idea of *regional diversity* is getting stronger and stronger. It is a kind of new social consciousness brought up amidst the move towards globalization. This is where an independent designer may have his “piece of cake”. The fundamental problem here is of course that of “social acceptance”. The most characteristic mosque symbols seem to be the minaret or the dome or both. Now, it is truly a challenge for architects to decide how the minaret and the dome should be reinterpreted, if a traditional vocabulary is accepted by the architect. Should the architects prefer to further develop the regional characteristics, he may end up with an esoteric design or else traditional one, or, again, something in between.

The dispute would then be between the all-encompassing style of mosque or, following the *regional diversity*, a multi-image, a plurality of style. The point is that this argument applies also to any buildings which are meant to have an Islamic expression.

- Lastly, the architects’ education and training should also be held responsible for the creation and thus transformation of the expressions of the Muslim community. The issue of *historical awareness* will immediately come to mind. A case in point is the fact that modern interpretations of mosque expressions tend to ignore the historical references of Indonesia. Mostly, the bedrock of their concept lies somewhere in the universality of logic (structurally right, honest, respect of materials, economy, efficiency, etc.), and not within the immediate context of the environment (e.g., the use of flat roofs without domes).

Conversely, the venture into the creation of new architectural idioms should also be hailed as the enrichment of architectural

expressions, assuming, of course, that sooner or later they may be accepted by the community at large.

But the controversy remains. It may well be aggravated by the absence of Indonesian traditional architectural historiography. Educational institutions may have an instrumental role in resolving the problem, albeit it may take a long time.

## Notes

1. The authors of this paper would like to thank Mr. Prasetyo Effendi of the Bandung Institute of Technology, Mr. Josef Prijotomo of the Surabaya Institute of Technology, and Mr. Ardi Pardiman Parimin of Gadjah Mada University for their information, critical views, and suggestions. They would also like to express their appreciation to Mr. Wondoamiseno and Mr. Ismudianto of Gadjah Mada University for allowing them to use materials in their collections.

2. By Javanese we mean those whose mother tongues are Javanese and reside in the South-Central part of Java.

3. This observation is incongruent with that of de Graaf and Pijper. See, for example, H.J. de Graaf, "The Origin of the Javanese Mosque", *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 4 (1963): 1-5; and G.F. Pijper, "Minaret in Java", *India Antiqua* (Leiden: Brill, 1947), pp. 61-82.

4. Both de Graaf and Pijper missed this point in their description of the Javanese mosque.

5. Cf. Josef Prijotomo, *Ideas and Forms of Javanese Architecture* (Yogyakarta: UGM, 1984).

6. For archetype, see Carl G. Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1964). For the relation of spatial archetype and civilization and social organization, see Mimi Lobell, "Spatial Archetypes", *Revision* 6, no. 2 (1983): 69-82.

7. Field experience.

## Discussion

### Gulzar Haider

I would like to thank my Indonesian colleagues for showing us a wide range of materials. I was especially struck by the Demak Mosque because six years ago I had a chance to visit the building in an assignment to report on its condition. I have since been telling people around the world how significant that monument is. In the report we suggested that the prayer area of the mosque be restored. From what I see today the building is exactly as it was six years ago. For those of you who have not seen the Demak Mosque, I would like you to know that not only is it the oldest mosque in Southeast Asia but it also has the most incredible plan. It consists of twelve columns with the four in the centre higher than the others. Many myths and legends are attached to these elements. What has happened is that the trusses started to give way because of the sinking foundation of one column. First, the Dutch government at the time intervened by adding masonry walls to support the settling structure. The walls are opaque and covered with white tiles of the kind used in the West for public buildings. This was followed by the addition of a false ceiling to hide the slightly deflecting structure. The result is akin to putting a false ceiling in an Ottoman mosque to hide Sinan's dome or to splitting the space of an important building leaving a much smaller and lower entity.

This situation here is important as the Demak Mosque has been chosen as the prototype for Indonesian mosques. The hidden and "band-aided" structure should be uncovered, as it could be a source of pride to the whole of Southeast Asia. It is technically possible and I strongly recommend it should be done.

### Sam Hall Kaplan

I was heartened by the growing consciousness of regional identity that I saw and glad that we are beginning to think of space not as an object but as an event and an event that tells stories. It is interesting that what I saw, what they are trying to do there, simply to make people's lives safe, comfortable, and happy, is in many ways what we are trying to do in Disneyland. As a consultant to Disneyland, I can tell you that we try to tell stories and we try to make people's lives happy, safe, and comfortable. It is not the buildings themselves that people relate to, but the use of the buildings as a backdrop, as a setting for events, happenings, rides, or whatever people want to do. What we are learning is that we have to avoid abstract paradigms that are arbitrarily imposed from other cultures and other places as solutions to be dropped down on communities, be it 450 mosques parachuted into the jungle or Disneyland. One has to look to regional and site-specific cultures and have designs that respond to that culture, to that context, and to its history, be it religious, social, or economic.



**Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim**

I was very excited to see the images of activities in the settlements, and I am particularly interested in identifying whether the kinds of events in these images (unlike the events at Disneyland) are basic to the culture and life of the community. I would like to inquire about the ritual events that constitute the structural feature of that community, something that goes way beyond the written history of a particular religion, something very deep that I know exists in many other cultures. In my culture, for instance, there are rituals and events which account for very significant parts of the settlement process itself: the laying of the foundation, the marking of the boundaries, the organizing of the community. There must be in Indonesia, like in any other living society with a cultural heritage, events which are not just symbolic but which also embody within their structure a possibility for organizing the production and maintenance of the settlement. I would appreciate some examples regarding these events in the community.

**Gunawan Tjahjono**

Of course the Javanese have a lot of rituals, mainly to do with the cycles of life. We have birth, circumcision, wedding, and death rituals and a traditional weekly ritual for the rice goddess. But besides the life cycle and weekly rituals, there are religious rituals associated with Islam three times a year. What I think is very important on these occasions is the social gatherings because they always take place in the usual *pendapa* which has at least one open hall. Everybody sits down together and nobody mentions his position — as a senior or an official. It is a kind of antistructure happening inside the structure, as the rituals bind the people in the house. This is very important because the house is actually the centre of the social network and so it is bound to the society.

Nowadays we consider rituals an expensive waste, but I think the most essential reason for keeping the rituals is the social bond, the functional social bonds they create. Each ritual has its own process of course, and I will just give you an example of the biggest ritual in Javanese life, which is the wedding. It goes back to ancient history and the re-creation of the universe. Males and females coming together to the wedding are separated: males sit in one group and the females in another. Then through the ceremony, the two groups are united together in a symbolic meaning. Also through a performance of puppet shadow plays, the spirits of the two are shown: positive and negative, male and female, heaven and earth. As this is the biggest event in Javanese life, the size of a Javanese house has to be accordingly related to this event. Because the Javanese know about the module system, which is seldom mentioned in Javanese architecture, they plan for the seating position in groups of four guests, four by four, and this is called *rampatan*. During the wedding ceremony one can understand how the Javanese house takes shape, especially the *joglo* (typical Javanese house form) which

has a very sharply rising roof. Right under that roof the bride and bridegroom sit together; and under the heaven point the two groups which are separated become joined together and then back up to the most sacred place of the house which is the abode of the rice goddess Sri. The goddess provides safety, fertility, and prosperity for the bridegroom. So after that ritual an anti-climax occurs and the world goes back to its routine again. I think there is a very deep meaning to rituals if we can understand them.

### **Jale Erzen**

My impression of the kampung was that it was not chaotic at all, even if the order was not one of pure geometry. There seemed to be an absolute neatness and each square inch of space had its specific function, although property borders were not marked. The sharing of activities was also apparent in the way one was unsure where one house ended and the next began. Only the patio seemed to indicate the individual house.

The question that bothers me is whether this communal sharing and order in the kampung can survive an increase in the income of the family. The other question is whether the kampung can survive if Islamic fundamentalism were to be adopted.

### **Hariadi**

I am very happy that you mentioned that the kampung is not chaotic because actually it is not, if you look at the deep structure of the kampung itself. We can look, for instance, at the kampung from the perspective of the social network of the people in this place. Even in trying to number the houses they have a special system that people can understand, which proves that the arrangement is totally nonchaotic.

As for the economic condition in the kampung, I would like to say that it is not a very simple question because the kampung is not only a place for low-income people but there are also many educated people and university graduates who live there. If you go to Ratmakan, for instance, the buildings along the main path are the houses of the more educated people. So even in this very small environment you still have a stratification of people. A doctor, I think from Australia, tried to look at the different hierarchies of people. In Ratmakan we have different socio-economic levels, which have improved conditions in this kampung because the high-income people can ask for help from the low-income people, and then perhaps the high-income people have to share something with the low-income people. A kind of *gotong royong* (a very popular Indonesian term for the spirit of mutually helping each other) exists even between the high- and low-income people.

But one thing that I would like to stress about the social relationship in the kampung, which seems to be very united, is that it is actually the result of many different factors. I looked into this question in

my dissertation on this kampung and found out that much can be explained by environmental pressures such as density. The people have small houses and sometimes extra family members living there and so it becomes a problem because they cannot perform all their daily activities in the house. What happens is that they extend their activities outside the house to various places such as the guard post, the open spaces, the bank of the river, the neighbour's houses, or the mosque. The houses in the kampung are very different from those in Kotabaru or in a suburb where every activity can be accommodated in one place. This has become an important implication for decision-makers in trying to look at the essential components of the kampung itself.

**Hasan-Uddin Khan**

I was interested to see that in some of the earlier examples the question of the direction in the mosques was not a prime concern. I am curious to know what has developed; whether this is now in fact something that has become normative or is still very flexible.

**Gunawan Tjahjono**

We have really very little knowledge about how the question of direction has developed, but I think that the cardinal direction has always been, since ancient times, a kind of direct experience, a kind of archaic knowledge for the Javanese. After that there is a very special classification system based on five, which has four cardinal directions and one centre. This classification system is used to arrange the location of a village or villages and then each village has a centre which is the market. This was the norm before the coming of the Hindu influence and before Islam of course. After the coming of foreign influences, this element was incorporated into the existing classification system. After the coming of Islam, I think it was quite possible to apply the existing framework which had already become myth and become part of daily life. But now, is it normative or is it flexible? I think it is quite flexible but not as normative as it used to be.

**Asaduz Zaman**

I would like to ask about your programme of mosques for the future. Most of the mosque examples that we have seen are related to a Javanese style or culture. But you have many islands besides Java, such as Sumatra and Sulawesi, with building traditions of their own. How do you expect to take care of the various styles if in the future you build mosques on those islands? Could a Javanese-type mosque be built on other islands in Indonesia?

**Gunawan Tjahjono**

Since our presentation was necessarily limited in its coverage, the

question of mosques in other parts of Indonesia could not be addressed. We had to limit ourselves and focus on one setting which would encompass mosque to house to give you a picture of how it looks. We could also have given you a panoramic presentation of mosques in Indonesia and tried to classify them. But I can tell you that at the beginning of the Islamic era, according to some writings by de Graaf and others, we learn that several parts of Indonesia shared similar mosque shapes. Later Java continued to retain this shape while Aceh and North Sumatra no longer retained the mosque type with the multilayer roof. Also West Sumatra had its own type and Lombok favoured a very simple hut shape.

Professor Hugh O'Neil here has a very large collection of information on mosques in Indonesia. If you would like to have more details about the mosque in every part of Indonesia, he is the right person to ask.

#### **Hugh O'Neil**

As an Australian, I am lucky enough to have easy access to this fascinating culture. But I cannot help reacting immediately to the rather restricted view that is given of the great richness and depth of expression in Javanese culture which finds itself ultimately expressed within the development of Islamic culture in Java. The rituals and the happenings of everyday life in Ratmakan do not give any kind of indication of the richness and variety within this culture. Shadow plays, on the other hand, are filled with meaning for anybody who has spent any time living in this superb place, and it is always a wonder to me that so much has been retained and given so much meaning in the context of the life of the followers of the Prophet Muhammad. If you were to go to a circumcision ceremony in Central Java for instance, it is still likely that there would be an all-night-long performance of the *wayang*. It would be about Gatotkaca, who is the son of Bima, one of the five *pandawa* (the five brothers in Javanese *wayang* play) — the five wonderful brothers of the Mahabratha. Perhaps in Ratmakan there would not be any performance from the repertoire of the *wayang* these days, but rather there would be a reinterpretation of the Islamic law through the *wayang*.

I have been asked to what extent Central Javanese conditions of building are used and incorporated throughout Indonesia. I can respond only by saying that I am sure that if you were to go to West Sumatra as mentioned, with that extraordinary culture where the old Indonesian system of inheritance is through women, or to Band Aceh, you would get into most intricate discussions about the way in which Islam finds its expression in this country. And in response to Professor Arkoun's comments, I would just like to say that the main reason Islam finds such a rich expression in Indonesian culture is that it has been allowed to flow into the laws of the islands.

**Rasem Badran**

From the Indonesian experience we have learned that certain forces dictate the basic structure and formation of the urban fabric of these settlements. For example, the traditional social behaviour expressed in ritual events characterizes the image of the urban fabric in its spatial formation. However, there might be other components which have had a great impact in initiating human creativity, such as the measures implemented to solve climatic conditions or the maintenance of adequate local construction methods in formalizing the image of these settlements.

In our Arab-Islamic world diverse models of vernacular urban elements distinguish one region from another, which reflect the socio-cultural and ecological factors ruling the structure of the urban communities on the macro level. Geoclimatic, technological, and economic conditions define particularly the nucleus (the micro unit) of a settlement vis-à-vis Jeddah, Riyadh, or Qatif in Saudi Arabia. It would be interesting to know to what extent these factors have influenced the vernacular architectural expression.

**Hariadi**

The issue of the climate is a very interesting one because we always talk about culture, without trying to look at different aspects of the environment. I have no idea about the problems of climate here but I can recall that when I lived in the kampung for a year, I would come from my place of work in the university where it seemed rather hot to the kampung where suddenly conditions seemed to be cooler. One thing that I would hypothesize about is the narrowness of the paths as a possible reason for the decrease of the temperature compared with other places. Also the overhang of two houses that meet together, creating an umbrella-like effect, may contribute to the cooler temperature. Maybe there are other reasons, but in my experience narrow lane and narrow path areas help to maintain a comfortable climate.

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## General Discussion

### Aziz Esmail

I would like to make a few remarks in the light of our recent discussions. I think that Professor Kuban made a very important point that has gone undeveloped. He was saying — and I am paraphrasing — that the discontinuity that modernity has ushered in was preceded by many such smaller changes, a series of ruptures, throughout Islamic history. And it could well be that the historical legacies or possibilities of this history have not yet been exhausted. Now, I think this is a terribly important point, and I would like to elaborate on two of the concepts that have been mentioned.

First of all, lest we get carried away by the concept of rupture, I think we must not overdramatize or exaggerate the notion of a chasm, a hiatus between the modern world and the old world. Because, if we do, we would be stuck with the very dichotomy between modernity and tradition that we are seeking to go beyond. And I think we must seriously address the question of what are the intrinsic or built-in possibilities of change within history, what are the latent or potential possibilities in the historical legacy itself for change. And to do that one has to do several things. The most important, I think, is to look at symbolic systems, because there is something unique and quite distinctive about symbolic language. Symbols have within them a certain logic of development, a logic of unfolding, of evolution. Symbols modify one another, they supersede one another, they grow out of other symbols, and undergo mutations.

By definition, symbols are open-ended. They are evocative. There is a certain inexhaustibility about them. They carry latent meanings. And what happens, I think, is that in favourable historical situations some of these latencies get a chance to surface. In unfavourable historical circumstances, the latencies are lost, and when that happens, the symbols turn into fetishes, into idols, and one of the critical things that then needs to be done is to try and undo the petrification of symbols — to undo the fetishes, not as an end in itself but as a means to an end. Because when fetishes are done away with, then the way is open for symbols to speak again. And I think if we do not do this, then we remain stuck with dichotomies: modernity-tradition; rationality-irrationality, and so on. I think it is tempting to speak in terms of dichotomies because it is easier to think that way. But then, what is easier is not necessarily better. Sometimes it is: at times, the best is the easiest, and one is fortunate when that happens. But life is not all good fortune.

The other issue I wanted to discuss is that when we talk about intermediate structures or mediation, there is no direct or easy linkage between intellectual discourse and a practice like architecture. On the one hand, we have intellectual discourse, which is important — I do not think we can do away with philosophical discourse. On the other hand, you cannot directly translate philosophical discourse into craftsmanship. And if one does not do that, then one remains on the level of generalization or speculation. I do not think it is a simple matter, just to transfer or translate from the intellectual to the craftsman's level. One has to evolve a methodology,

a system of transfer, from one plane to the other, from the level of generalization to the level of practice. Associated with that is the question of the universal and the particular. And I think there is also a certain danger in minimizing the value of particularity because just as in religion, for instance, you cannot do away with particular manifestations, because there is always a particular community, a particular institution, or set of institutions, that embodies spirituality. The temptation to look for disembodied spirituality, the temptation to look for a disembodied philosophy, is, I think, a dangerous temptation. Culture always particularizes; and the question is not how to do away with particularities and to rise to the universal. I do not think that it is possible or desirable. The question is how to make the particularity expressive, how to make sure that it has windows, and it is not exclusive, and not closed in itself. Ideally, I think, universalism should be one's horizon, but only the horizon. A horizon is not the landscape, and if you look at the horizon and forget the immediate landscape, then you have the kind of problem that is mentioned in connection with the Greek sage Dionysus, who was so busy studying and looking at the stars that he fell into a ditch as he was walking along.

Now the other important matter I would like to bring up is that you need a mediating concept between the realm of the intellectual and the philosophical on one hand and that of practice on the other. What I find useful here is the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* — in other words, of practical reason, that mediates between pure rationality on one hand and communal or professional practice on the other. My impression is that this is not happening in architecture. I may be wrong, but I have not sensed it. I cannot really speak about architecture with any iota of expertise, and I would rather use as an illustration something else which I happened to work on several years ago, namely, the philosophical or social issues that surround the practice of medicine, an area I think one can find an analogy.

Arthur Kleinman, at Harvard, who is both a physician and a social anthropologist, developed an interesting series of concepts in the field of social medicine. He distinguishes disease from illness. Disease is the biological, the pathological, process that occurs in the body. Illness is the social construction of it, because, after all, there is here the dimension of meaning: how people interpret it, how people think about it, how society and culture react to it. But I think what is worthwhile remembering is that the meaning does not replace the biological issues. It surrounds them and it broadens them. Similarly, in architecture, you need that kind of relationship, where there is a larger issue that does not replace the logic of the practice itself, that does not act as a substitute for it, but, as it were, surrounds it, in the adjoining area, and broadens it to a greater cultural discourse. In both fields — medicine as well as architecture — there is the temptation to substitute one for the other, just as in medicine there is the temptation, for instance, with people who have become disillusioned with modern scientific or biological medicine to go back to herbal medicine, Ayurveda, or astrology, if not witchcraft, and



so on. That is a kind of primitivism or traditionalism. The same thing, I suspect, could occur in architecture. One wants to go back to the rustic, the simple, the ancient, and the primordial. How to avoid that and at the same time have a kind of synthesis between what I would call practically informed intellect on one hand, and intellectually inspired practice on the other, is the sort of thing we need to look at.

### **Mohammed Arkoun**

I would like to tell you what I have learned in a few days in Indonesia. It is my first visit to this country and I was eager to see how Islam is expressed in this country. I am struck by two facts on which we have to reflect and which are, to my mind, the main results of our inquiry here.

The first fact, which has been raised several times, is that Indonesians have been very flexible about the theological requirements of Islam such as directing mosques towards Mecca. This has worked during the centuries since Islam entered freely in this country. It worked. Indonesians are Muslims and they perform their prayers; it has not been a problem for them. This is extremely important because Islam historically has been extremely flexible in all the societies and throughout the diverse cultures, ethnic groups, languages, traditions, and religions into which it has spread. The main lesson for me is a lesson of humanism. The humanism of Islam is precisely this flexibility to let all cultures remain in the society, expressing itself through the society, and giving these various expressions a spiritual framework to enhance through what the Quran and the Hadith may bring in terms of spiritual values, giving dynamism to all these cultures. It has worked up to now.

Three confrontations, which took place in the classical age of Islam from the seventh century to the twelfth century, are known as *munawara*. We have many books relating these confrontations: intellectual, theological, legal, and literary confrontations on all levels — confrontations among all specialists who assembled in one house in all major cities of Islam in the classical age: Baghdad, Isfahan, Fez. They had confronted many positions which had given this humanist civilization to Islam of which all Muslims are proud today. So we must be aware about what is happening today in the expression of Islam.

I am afraid the standardized theology which is spreading today for ideological and political reasons may even come to this country which has had the privilege to be free of it so far. One can learn in this country a magnificent lesson of tolerance and a magnificent lesson of all the possibilities open to Islam to develop today, in this violent world in which we are living, to develop a lesson of Islamic humanism. This is absolutely precious.

That being said, I would also like to underline the fact that each seminar of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture becomes a search. We have always two aims, two goals. One is a theoretical framework for thinking, for instance, how to react today to this standard

theology which is spreading, which is imposing on us through political systems, through states, a kind of oppression on our freedom for expression. We need this theoretical framework to know, for example, that for all religions, not only for Islam, there is a theoretical position discussed by sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and theologians about the issue of who produces what. Does religion produce the society or does the society shape the religion according to the needs of the society? This is a theoretical problem but we fail still to move ahead in our search to establish an intellectual space for new thinking, address new questions which have not been addressed in Islamic thought, neither in the classical age nor in our modern age.

The second observation concerns what is going on in our societies regarding architecture and urbanism. We have had a lot of presentations, we learned a lot of facts, but, again, what does one do with these facts? How does one interpret these facts? We have not yet formulated enough clear conclusions about what is really happening in the societies to which we go, and I wish so much that our Indonesian friends would express themselves more clearly about the issues faced here in this country. I hope you will continue to think about this and I urge you to write, to express yourself, and to send papers to the Office of the Award in Geneva. It will feed us, it will nourish our inquiry, and it will be extremely useful.

#### **Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim**

The greatest lesson that I have learned in the context of this seminar is what I saw and felt in our visit to the informal settlement of the kampung. This experience, in addition to what we have learned from the Indonesian speakers, has been very profound in crystallizing in my mind an important lesson which I would like to reflect on.

First regarding the discussions about the sacred and the profane: I would like to say that the sacred has been defined and actually redefined by the heroic acts of the people. I saw and I felt the presence of sacredness as a real and living quality in the spaces of the most humble; the kampung is full of that quality. One can see, identify, and even speak about its properties and attributes in the most significant and articulate ways, in the same way one can address the sacredness of the historically most sophisticated buildings.

I believe that sacredness in the context of Islam as a culture, and as a faith, is more a quality that can be obtained in material reality, in space, or any other artifact through work. The kampung that we visited is an example of that, and I would insist it is as an example of labour and work that can produce this quality. We need to learn more about it. This sacredness or this quality of goodness is obtainable through work, and this work needs an apparatus, needs a mechanism that lifts it from the ordinary to the extraordinary, from the mundane to the excellent. And a very important aspect that we need to learn is geometry or geometrical transformation which takes the perception of the space from the ordinary experience of the people to the extraordinary level. We need to know different

kinds of geometry and different kinds of tools to give to our students and our colleagues so that the vitality and the dynamism of community-shaping disciplines can have a geometrical construct. We do not have the geometrical construct but we have the technological tools which allow us to do that.

Now the third lesson which I learned very concretely, even though I was aware of it, at least in theory, is that rituals are tools for transformation, not a social and cultural transformation of the society, but actual physical transformation. There is a particular class of ritual events which relates to the activities of settlements; these events are known in every society. I think rituals are a living geometry; they are a kind of formulation in the space of society that we need to learn more about.

Finally, I feel that I am leaving this seminar with the very real knowledge and conviction that sacredness is a concrete quality of our time. It is not something that I have to search for in the past. I saw something of it here and we see something of it everywhere. Also I think we have to develop tools to capture this quality and to make spaces. Geometry and rituals are two of these tools.

### **Dogan Kuban**

The main topic of the seminar is the architectural expression in contemporary Muslim societies. After twelve years of discussions within the framework of the Aga Khan Award and forty-one years of practice and teaching, I feel that we need to speak more about building practice than about theory. But as many colleagues have also remarked, we sometimes tend to be more social observers and interpreters of religion than architects. Concerning practice, I have reached some personal conclusions which I would like to present to you as underlying principles of design in Muslim countries.

1. The first is contextuality. Contextuality means, in our case, many things. But it can essentially be reduced to a consciousness of the actual physical shape of our cities. A positive contextuality demands respect for the historical heritage. An artistic contextuality is the consciousness about the aesthetic content of traditional forms. A historical contextuality is the consciousness of the historical content of the physical environment. We may speak of spiritual and real-life context, etc., but these existed before the world of the architects.

A proper understanding and application of this principle will always help to formulate adequate approaches. Evidently this is a universal principle in design strategy and methodology, but is often overlooked.

2. The second principle is appropriateness. Again this has been known since Vitruvius but in the case of contemporary Muslim societies it needs a specific understanding. I think that appropriateness is contemporaneity, that is to say, Muslims like other peoples want to be contemporary. They do not want to live in medieval environments. This means that our scholarly or professional discussions cannot change their vision of the modern world or their expectation of being part of the contemporary world. As a result

the bulk of present-day architecture in the Muslim countries is a direct imitation or interpretation of modern architecture. The context is obviously the contemporary architect. To obtain a balance among so many interacting contexts in which the conscious architect has to work is a difficult task. This is why we are still in search of proper expression.

3. The outcomes of the first and second principles are harmony and continuity. These may be regarded as independent principles. But it seems that they are rather different appellations of the same attitudes. Contextual relationship does not mean a formal, mimetic relationship, although it does not exclude it. In essence, sensitive both to the past and to the present, the new should be integrated with the existing through a careful textural, dimensional, and spatial study.

4. A final observation or principle is that formal expression cannot but express its cultural framework. Accordingly, zealous discussions on the nature of contemporary Islam is superfluous for architects. What is in their mind will be expressed in their work or else they will translate corporate demands into their architectural language.

Why is it that we find chaos in our environment? And why do some of us think that the past was presumably more harmonious? First we are more sensitive to our actual situation. The change expresses a failure of our society to comprehend the complexity of the contemporary world. Our philosophy of life seems helpless vis-à-vis the demand patterns created by the modern world. The idea of an ideal past, the desire to go back to some illusory past harmony, is the outcome of this incomprehension.

This has nothing to do with Islam. Societies remain Muslim. But when the "Muslimness" is to be defined in past terms, it cannot cope with the modern world. We think the past was harmonious because we do not know it; this idealized past never existed. But in practice, Muslim people today do not even show sympathy for yesterday's environment. The past may have been more coherent because the number of elements in the life equation was very limited. Lack of information resulted, in those days, in very slow changes in the demand patterns. The age of information in which we live increases enormously the components of modern life. Sheer numbers completely close the door of the past. The numbers and information are irrevocable elements of the contemporary life context. Contextuality in architecture can disregard these elements.

Information brings another dimension to the Muslim world. Arabs, Indonesians, Bosnians, Central Asians lived their own textural traditions. A very superficial knowledge about other parts of the Muslim world could not bring these different regional traditions under a single umbrella. Islamic architecture is an unspecific title today. We have more knowledge about the historical traditions of the Muslim world. Contextuality within this new domain of information is a challenge for the formulation of a contemporary architecture in the Muslim world with more universal traits. This tendency exists already. Whether it is an asset or an espace to eclecticism remains to be seen.

**William Lim**

As an architect I cannot but agree with the cogent statement made by Professor Kuban on some of the basic issues of how design should be approached. I would also like to support Professor Arkoun's position.

I would like to present examples of what is happening in Singapore and perhaps also in Thailand which may be of relevance. Singapore is a secular state, multiracial and multireligious. But the problem we face is that there are firm believers of different faiths (Muslim, Christian, Buddhist) aggressively preaching their own religion. So recently the government passed very strong and thorough laws which try to prevent this from happening. Some will view this as a constraint, a restriction on freedom, but I think the larger issue is communal or religious conflict, which the government is trying to avoid. Now this is really quite a fundamental issue until the community and the people concerned can understand the fact that we have to be tolerant of each other. Otherwise something will have to be done, whether by having one dominant religion or maintaining a multireligious society.

In Thailand, a Buddhist country, an organization called Effort has been in existence for the last fifteen to twenty years, basically funded by different religious groups, dedicated to initiating multireligious programmes, whether it be class programmes, youth programmes, theological discussions, etc. This type of phenomenon may be worthwhile looking into in order to broaden the level of understanding between different religions.

When we look at modern society, it is very interesting to see that the Western press is trying to make all world events (China, Europe, the Gulf) into a "capitalism versus socialism" debate. I would rather say the battle is about freedom, and freedom of choice and tolerance. Modernity is moving in a direction in which people want to have the freedom of choice, need the freedom of choice, in order to operate as individuals, as communities, as groups, to exist and to progress.

The next point I want to comment on is Aziz Esmail's comparison of architecture and medicine. Notwithstanding that in every discipline there is a side of art and one of science, I do not think it exists to the same extent in architecture: in that realm art and science are rather like what the Chinese would call "yin" and "yang", both sides of a coin. You are looking at the conscious, subconscious, rational, irrational, spiritual, material, etc., and the art side of architecture is the spiritual side. No doubt we have to look at methodology; we have to try to see how things have been put together. However, what is architecture about?

Architecture is about the relationship with the users, not only fulfilling a function, but providing delight to the user. In a religious building, spiritual elements count. If I walk into a mosque or a church or a temple, the spiritual response that I can get from that building tells me whether it has been successfully done or not. All the theoretical explanations, by the designer particularly are of very little relevance if the experience has not been transmitted to the user.

And I think we really have got to put much more emphasis on what architecture is about. There is a real danger in most architectural meetings, which are focused on talking about methodology, talking about style, talking about forms, when we should be talking about delight, about the spiritual element. There are experiences that you can provide to the users and the way to do it is in line with Professor Arkoun's speech: there is a need to be rebellious, to be rebellious against the existing position in order to break out of the trap which everybody is in. To be rebellious means you do not totally discard, but you always review and you are prepared to discuss what is acknowledged as acceptable now.

### **Kemas Madani**

I would like to express three points. The first, regarding "modern and traditional", I would like to introduce a premise declared by the mosque *ulamas* in Indonesia. The premise was written at a meeting of Nadhdatul Ulama (formerly a political Islamic party in Indonesia, now an Islamic organization) held in Situbondo in East Java in 1984. The premise says: "Still use the old traditions which are good and useful, while taking the new from modern society which are better." I think this premise is not only good for the *ulamas* but also good for Muslim architects. This is an important statement for Muslim societies today because in many Muslim countries they tend to throw away what is good from the old traditions while taking what is bad from modern society.

Second, Islamic architecture has two meanings for me: Islamic architecture is the architecture in Muslim countries; Islamic architecture is the architecture suitably designed for Muslim activities according to the Quran and the Hadith. When we talk about Islamic architecture, we usually prefer to talk in relation to the first meaning. When we discussed the mosque, we talked about the minaret, the beautiful *mihrab*, the dome, etc. but we did not talk about the atmosphere of the space which can make the believer feel closer to God.

Thirdly, I want to discuss expressions of Islam. We prefer talking about symbols. It is quite right to talk about symbols, but symbols are not the most important thing. The important thing is that we have to know the essence of Muslim society's problems, including what Muslims need, what they think, what they feel, what they want, etc. The main point is how we as architects can use our role to give them the opportunity to be good Muslims, with good living conditions, so they can carry out Muslim activities.

We should be able to provide for them the living conditions and environments that will enable them to live as good Muslims according to the Quran and Hadith.

### **Afaf Mahfouz**

Is it necessary that only women have to talk about women? If Mohammed Arkoun is frustrated, as a Muslim woman I am doubly so because I do share his frustration as a Muslim person, but also

there is the frustration of being a Muslim woman, even at this seminar. I would like to hear some of my brothers talk about the issue, for it is not a woman's issue only. It is for both of us and we have to discuss it together.

When it comes to women, discussion of the issue is limited. This situation is general: not only does it occur in Muslim society but I have been touring the world speaking about women and development, and it is always the same. The time is always cut or shortened or decreased.

One last point related to this issue of women and that is it is always dealt with by women only. In response to Mohammed Arkoun's request for feedback, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that in the session on women, the chairperson was a woman, the speaker was a woman, the discussant was a woman. This has to be changed. We can alternate chairing, discussing, and presenting, whether it is a woman's issue or a building issue or any other issue. Women and men are co-builders; they are co-architects of the future.

#### **Gulzar Haider**

In my seven-member client committee there were no women and it is not because I did not try. On a first contact with a client, I ask that a long questionnaire be filled out especially by women of all ages and backgrounds. I am sorry to report that I never get these questionnaires back.

A recent example from an academic community in Kingston, Ontario, is quite revealing. I presented the building committee, mostly composed of university professors, with two issues: how many women would attend the mosque and where should they be placed. In regard to numbers and percentages, the response varied from 10 to 100 percent. As to placing women within the mosque, the situation was so confused that I did not want to get into a theological *ijtihad*. Instead I helped them frame the question by drafting a letter and asked them to consult with *ulamas* or whoever could give them an authoritative response. I listed the five possibilities for the physical location of women in the mosque: the mezzanine, the basement, to the left of men, to the right of men, or behind men. They sent these possibilities to thirty-two people in North America considered authorities on Islamic subjects: professors, chairmen of religious studies, directors of Islamic centres. The answers were rather confused: the split was 50/50 for upstairs and downstairs and arguments against left, right, or behind were all very interesting. I would therefore advise my architect colleagues to be careful not to find themselves in situations where they are responsible for the *ijtihad*.

#### **Baroroh Barid**

I would like here to speak about the paper of Dr. Afaf Mahfouz. I think in Islam, the concept of women is completely stated. The first function of women in Islam is the same as that of men; they

have the same duties. Only in family life are women different from men, according to their *qodrat*, their potential. When you talk about women and space, why do you put the stress on space with women, I think it lowers the meaning of women here.

In Indonesia, as it was stated by my colleagues, women have a high position. After the coming of Islam to Indonesia, the *ulamas* did not guide women on Islamic teachings, and therefore they did not know their position or their function in the community. After the awakening of Indonesian women through nationalism led by Kartini (a female leader living around the turn of the century who had inspired women to come forward, to at least start learning to read, etc.), and through reformism in Indonesia, they improved their position.

I think it is time to stop differentiating between men and women. In these modern times we have to put women in the front line along with men. We are brothers and sisters and we have to develop our country together as in Indonesia. If we speak about women separately from men, it is because the world is dominated by men, and we now have to change this. We have to begin now, men and women in the same line, to make progress, especially in the Muslim world.

#### **Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim**

True, the fundamental thing is the relation between men and women, sisters and brothers, but this relationship is problematic, so it needs to be actually repaired. But with regard to the architectural reference to this relationship, I certainly believe that the mosque is not the domain that needs to be revised. Of course it needs to be thought of, but since it is a space of ritual, maybe we have to subscribe to what the ritual says. More importantly is the public space in all Islamic cities. It is the street and the public square and everywhere else where we encounter each other as man and woman that is disastrously dealt with. And I think that this is not only an inhuman and oppressive space for women but also for men. If we reconsider that space and how we encounter each other in that space, then we might be on the right track on revising the situation. I think design can play a very, very significant role in that regard.

#### **Mohammed Arkoun**

I have to say one thing about this burning, important issue of women in Muslim societies today. The case reported in Canada by our friend Gulzar Haider and so many other cases cannot be solved by using the traditional, theological tools which we use to give a *fatwa* according to the traditional schools. Here we shall lose our time, discussing methodology, but we have to lose it; it is an exercise we have to go through. But, again, without this intellectual framework we cannot really devise solutions for our time. And how do we do that? We have to open the whole problem of what we call Revelation, how to read the Quran today. But we are not ready to do it yet, and all that can be said in the framework of this inherited theology is intellectually irrelevant.



**Ismail Serageldin**

There is much to be said about the notion that the positioning of women in society has more to do with societal practice than with fundamental issues of Islam and that these societal practices are being legitimized by the manipulation of a terminology of Islam, as we have known from other phenomena as well. And there I would join Dr. Afaf Mahfouz in her plea that architectural criticism need involve intellectual criticism. We should look at gender issues so that we can have not just a question of awareness of the presence of women, but a liberation of the intellectual process of architectural criticism itself.

Proceeding from this need of criticism, I would like to tie together a few threads from the many valuable presentations that have been brought under the heading of transformation process. It has been pointed out that the metamorphoses required to cope with the change of today's world are profound. I think Raj Rewal's examples of the buildings that were unthinkable forty years ago (a television station, a studio, a centre of immunology, a seven-thousand person office complex) require from all of us new creations of architectural innovation. But for that, as Mohammed Arkoun has been telling us time and again, in architecture as well as in philosophy, we need to think the unthinkable. And I emphasize "in architecture as well as in philosophy". But for the metamorphosis not to fall into the problems mentioned by Aziz Esmail at the beginning of the session, we collectively in our discourse must break out of the dichotomies, the modern and the traditional. I invite you to reflect again on that image of the fifteenth-century calligraphy that, at least in my mind, was as "modern" as anything Mondrian has done. And it is breaking out of these conventions, these dichotomies, that will create the new intellectual space that enables us to bring to bear the critical arsenal of contemporary criticism on modernity as well as tradition. And this enriched and enriching criticism will be necessary to help us hold up a mirror to ourselves as His Highness the Aga Khan has invited us to do at the very beginning of this seminar.

Taking the essence of what Aziz Esmail said earlier on the distinction between illness and disease, I believe that adding a dimension of meaning is precisely what criticism can do to the physical act of architecture. It does not remove it, it does not replace it, but it adds dimensions and enables us to understand the deep structure of our evolving societies. For while the Muslim communities in exile, as Gulzar Haider has pointed out, may contribute to this task, it must still be done in the Afro-Asian reality of the Muslim societies themselves. This criticism that I am calling for provides echoes to the work of art, it adds facets to it, and it enriches the code that artists and critics contribute intellectually to resymbolizing the contemporary Muslim environment against, I must add, socio-cultural forces that will make it arid and inevitably will lead to a degree of manipulation of the symbols of populism. And symbolism, therefore, contrary to what some people have implied, is not alien to Islam; it is a central part of its legacy; it enriches everything.

And I believe that the richness we have seen in the Indonesian experience, in the expressions and meanings, gives us much food for thought.

The code that exists between users and artists is an essential part for this mediation process of cultural reality, but that code is changing. We need to recognize change as desirable; we cannot try to freeze the frame; it is healthy and required. I submit that daring to be bold in architecture as well as in thinking is a profoundly Islamic form of *ijtihad*. The code must be defined by the users as well as by the architects. It is not something that we define ourselves and then give to society; it is something that happens through the interaction between the society and the architect, and is only partially mediated by intellectuals and critics. Hasan-Uddin Khan has given us a lot to think about in regard to how truncated the process can become when state sponsorship intervenes.

And I would like to say that while we admire the kampung's organic reality and its beauty, I think it is dangerous to fall into the trap of romanticizing it. Certainly empowering people to handle their environment is essential, but that is not to mean that the role of architects is to be denied. They are the ones who will create the examples of tomorrow, not as statements to serve their ego, but as authentic expressions of their own societies. In some cases there is the mediation of the architect as opposed to the force of tradition alone, and mediation is expressed in the work of Gulzar Haider and in Abdelhalim's garden. All help to enrich the code as well as the environment. I believe, therefore, that we have to rethink that issue in terms of transformation and bring this to bear with a new vision.

Finally I would like to say what I have taken from this seminar. I share my colleagues' delight in the discovery of the Indonesian experience which gives us much to ponder upon after we leave these shores. But I admit to a frustration of my own, that of the different discourse and methodology between architect and social scientist. I think that Rasem Badran, Raj Rewal, Ali Shuaibi, and Gulzar Haider have given us a glimpse, but only a glimpse, of architectural creativity in the design process. But a gulf still divides the understanding of that design process and the critical philosophical, conceptual discourse. But I do hope that in the few days that we spent here we have taken a step towards bridging this gulf.

#### **Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim**

The kampung is an important experience for the architect. I do not think it is romanticizing it at all to call the attention of architects and the very formal institution of architects, at the philosophical, theoretical, and practical levels, to the informal processes of settlements in the same way that physicists are paying attention to another layer of light and reality of some atomic level, in the same way that biologists are paying attention to very complex dynamics of real life. Now we have witnessed the complexity of life in the

formal settlements, and we have tools as architects to study this ingenious complexity. We have geometry in the formal sense, but we need serious investigation into geometry beyond the Euclidean geometry that has blocked us for centuries. Also we must consider rituals — not in the anthropological sense of a celebration — but rather we must look at rituals architecturally, to understand them as a programmatic structure of the community, and as a structure by itself that embodies a social geometry that we need to identify, codify, and map and remap. Making formal efforts about an informal reality is the work of architects.

**Hasan Poerbo**

I would like to respond to Professor Arkoun's remark about Islamic humanism and tie it to what has been discussed about the *kampung*. I think what we have to face here, and also in many developing countries and Islamic societies, is that the architect has to be more effective when serving these communities. This places him in a very new position and he has to formulate for himself an entirely new approach. There is, I think, a need for a translation of what is called perhaps humanism into an entirely different process of design which places people in the centre of our concern. What is needed is a change in our attitude and a change in our vision about our role in society. It is this kind of motivation which should be developed further and interpreted in terms of methodology. We have had quite a debate here in Indonesia, for instance, on the implementation of our *Kampung Improvement Programmes* and even more on the implementation of housing programmes where very expensive mistakes were made. It is simply that we have been working without a concern for and without compassion, perhaps, for the people. And it is a reinterpretation of how you actually build with people that is so difficult to understand. Therefore I think that in the education of architects these dimensions should be taken into account as part of the intellectual discourse.

**Suwondo Soetedjo**

I think as architects we have to put the user at the forefront. Professor Poerbo spoke about the informal sector: we have to educate our users so that we can really interact, and then we have to, as Mr. Lim said, make use of our talents to give delight to the people.

**Ardi Pardiman**

Something interesting to me is the relationship between the sacred and the profane, the community and symbols. I think there is a relationship between these elements and we cannot ask the architect to discover a symbol for a community without knowing where it will go. Communities are so different: there is our traditional community and the modern one, and we do not know yet what the next modern community will be like. The one thing we know

is that our community now is more divergent than the traditional community. The question of sacredness is actually not only connected to religion but also to how the community perceives the sacred.

The people in a village in Bali, for example, perceive space in a completely different way than we do in our urban communities. They believe, for instance, that their ancestors occupy the same time and the same space as themselves and that there is no distinction between the world now and the world after death. So it is very difficult for us to replicate or maybe to duplicate the community with a set of symbols using our traditional ones. Our goal of maybe going back to something more settled on a smaller community scale is, I think, a very long way from what we are now debating about: the symbol of sacredness, the symbol of society, the symbol of community, which has become the spirit of the community and the driving force of the community.

#### **Hasan-Uddin Khan**

Throughout this conference we have been using the dualities of modernity and tradition, and being left with nationalism and internationalism, globalization and particularization in terms of building. This leaves us with a set of dichotomies. As an architect I found that the question of the reality of building today and the question of the intellectual discourse that we considered have not yet converged. I got the impression from the discussions that somehow the architects were expected to do that, to lay that bridge — not only to lay that bridge but to develop the intellectual discourse as well. Somehow I feel that you are asking a very tall task from an architect. Let the architect build and let the discourse come from Mohammed Arkoun and Aziz Esmail and others. Let us be aware of what the relationships are, but I now feel you are asking too much from the architect.

We have been talking in terms of dualities but let us rather think in terms of plurality. There is space for the modern approach and there is space for the traditional approach in our societies; it is not an either/or situation. In fact there are multiple approaches and I think the richness of our societies will come from that effort. Architects can be both: those who want to be modern should be modern, those who want to be traditional should be traditional. What is important is how we relate to society, what we do, and how we can intellectually produce great works of architecture. It is a big task to aim for good buildings that inspire and do something for us. Do not ask more; that is enough for us.

# Closing

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## **What Have We Learned?**

*Azim Nanji*

## **Farewell**

*Syahrul Syarif*

## **Islam and Indonesia**

*H.E. H. Munawir Sjadzali*

## **Closing Remarks**

*His Highness the Aga Khan*

## Contemporary Expressions of Islam in Buildings: What Have We Learned?

*Azim Nanji*

In attempting to answer the question: What have we learned?, I am conscious that, in part, we have, during this seminar in Indonesia, revisited and continued the conversation begun in 1977 at the first of these gatherings on the theme “Architecture in the Spirit of Islam”. It might therefore be more appropriate if I were to begin by highlighting what we have “unlearned” over thirteen years of discussions, particularly in regard to the understanding and construction of meaning of key concepts and terms that have been invoked throughout the seminar.

**Islam, Islamic, Muslim...** These terms have of course been at the heart of the discussions. The abundance of data growing with every seminar has revealed the complexity and variety of the relationship that exists among historical traditions, indigenous social and symbolic structures and built forms in Muslim society. By resisting the use of closed theological or juristic formulations of Islam, and remaining open to interpretations based on a broader ensemble of “texts” (including the architectural, oral, and artistic), the central terms have emerged as enabling, historically resonant, and richly polyvalent tools for comprehending the totality of the experience of Muslim peoples all over the world. More than ever, the seminar has taught us to reject perceived dichotomies between what might be broadly conceived as intellectual history (i.e., Islam as expressed in theological, philosophical, and legal modes) and social and cultural history (including the architectural, broadly ethical, and humanistic expressions) of Muslim life and thought from Morocco to the Philippines and now also from Alaska to Australia.

**Space, Buildings...** A couple of years ago, I was very fortunate to be part of a discussion in which Charles Moore helped me to understand the notion of “space” more clearly. He suggested that one might conceive of space as being analogous to fabric. Just as dresses are “fabricated” as specific expressions out of material, space is utilized to create built forms. Such a notion of space might indicate the common resources for the creation of built forms in Islam, namely the Quran, the life and example of the Prophet Muhammad, the lived historical experience of Muslim communities, the creative imagination of architects, builders, and others, all of which come together in an ongoing interaction within specific local environments. Buildings are consequently not merely forms of spatial organization, which can be regarded as a container of specific theological or symbolic meaning in Islam, but as living expressions, articulating conceptions of ethical, ritual, and social order.

**Contemporary, Western, Traditional...** All of these expressions have been problematic in contemporary terms, particularly because they engender perceived dichotomies between the past and the present, tradition and modernity, and, by implication, Islam and the West. The discussions of the past four days have demonstrated the need to rethink the ways in which we have geographically and intellectually “mapped” our world. Past Muslim legal constructs such as Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb have become irrelevant, which is not to say that they cannot be invoked for ideological reasons. The manner

in which the “West” perceived the Muslim world, from its presumed pre-eminent position at the centre, as the “Near East” or the “Middle East” led to the marginalization of large concentrations of Muslims who did not inhabit that geopolitical space and came further to be reflected in the way scholarship on Islam was exercised. The word “contemporary” stands at the juncture of all these revisions of previous modes of mapping. It is a category that allows us to place ourselves in a historical context which reflects a continuum encompassing traditional and modern. In addition, it can engender a revised world-view that is less Eurocentric and which adds reality to the interconnectedness of life and people in what has been called the “global village”. Our discussions have demonstrated the dichotomies and false dualities that can be generated by a narrow focus on difference and a mistaken view of the modern as a prelude to the obliteration of tradition.

**What We Have Learned.** Having made these general points, I can now go on to be more specific about what we have indeed learned. I would argue that what we have learned has not simply taken place in this room. It is not the product simply of the papers that were presented and the discussions that were held, but we have learned equally from the significant experience of being in Indonesia. Our understanding has been enriched by its spaces, its people, its food, its arts, and particularly through the social interactions that we have had with communities in the kampungs, the mosques, and elsewhere. Those experiences constitute an additional set of texts available to us. When we put together all these texts, they enlarge the resources out of which our learning experience has come.

**A New Discourse?** We have been invited first of all to initiate a new intellectual discourse, to initiate one that is integrated with the past, but not limited by it. It envisages two fundamental tasks:

- To develop a historical perspective on the past that may have been “frozen”, “mythologized”, or distorted.
- To seek an engagement with an intellectual modernity that clarifies and deconstructs such an imagined past, but also moves us beyond formulations tied to the dichotomies referred to before.

There are problems with this invitation, and some of these problems have been noted. One issue is that intellectual modernity is not a homogeneous construct. Intellectual modernity itself participates in many discourses, some of which challenge the very notion of rational discourse. I do not need to remind you that we live in a world where modernism has become post-modernism and that post-modernism itself is being revised so that it is not entirely clear in which realm one finds oneself at any given point! We are, to put it mildly, in the midst of a chaotic period in intellectual discourse. The existence of a methodological “Tower of Babel”, particularly in the universities and intellectual centres where we function, ought not, however, cause us to withdraw from an engagement. The task at hand is not to lock ourselves into any one discourse, but to be open to the way in which we can create an equilibrating intellectual discourse of our own. This rethinking, which is part of the conceptual framework

that the Award has engaged in for the past thirteen years, is particularly critical for our discussions on building, because it is not an activity that stops, waiting for some definitive discourse to emerge; it carries on in spite of it. It has also been emphasized throughout the discussions that architecture and building ought not to be divorced from the larger social and intellectual discourse that is going on outside itself. Architecture, like all other forms of cultural engagement, inquiry, and practice, is linked to all facets of human life. And it seems to me that one of the other important lessons that we have learned in this process is that we ought to seriously engage in developing mediating categories that allow us to negotiate the space between concept and practice. One such category is the idea of culture, modulated so as to allow us to view Islam in all of the diversity and richness of its visual, artistic, literary, and spatial engagement with various local contexts. In exploring issues of the relationship between architecture and the spirit of Islam, such a notion of culture represents buildings as one facet through which Muslim identity is expressed and materialized.

The bulk of the discussions as far as buildings were concerned tended to focus on the mosque. Some of our speakers have attempted to justify this focus. It is well known, however, that mosques are not the exclusive form of building, even for purely spiritual and ritual activities, within the Muslim world. Neither have they historically been limited to such use, but have also functioned as economic loci and centres of cultural interaction that have always been fundamental to the ethical purpose of Islam. While such traditionally multi-purpose spaces may have been reduced to a facility for a single purpose in our time, we may already be witnessing a form of reversal of certain historical patterns in the use of the mosque.

The mosque has also been the focal point of contemporary Muslim efforts to establish an architectural identity. Very often this has led to attempts that simply keep improving upon images of the past and of resisting attempts at discovering newer images in altered spaces. The mosque, perhaps more than any other form of building in contemporary Islam, reflects the inherent tension between two aspects of the modernization process: the growing differentiation in and separation of spheres of activity and life and the seemingly contrary desire to reintegrate these spheres with "Islam". During the course of the seminar, this tension became apparent in the discussion relating to the new relationships and orientations evident in the move of women from the traditionally perceived sphere of the private space to that of the public. Given some traditionalist Muslim orientations regarding the role of women in the life of the mosque, it was suggested that such marginalization was neither consistent with the ethical ideals of the Quran nor indeed in conformity with the aspirations of women to recover and articulate their own sense of identity as contemporary Muslims. Part of the ongoing dilemma may be further confused if the choice were made to define the problem of marginalization of women simply within an exclusively feminist discourse. It might at this stage be more



appropriate to highlight the issues within the wider Muslim ethical and social perspective of the family. This also has the advantage of linking conceptions of building to the needs of children and their psychological and social development under circumstances of stress and alienation generated by the disruptions in contemporary rural and urban life. The context of family permits a discourse of integration rather than opposition. In addition to the mosque and other buildings, particular attention also needs to be given to the question of adequate housing for the family and for the poor, increasingly the most marginalized group in most societies, because in many cases, as we know, they tend to be literally “home-less”.

In its contemporary context, architectural discourse, with its sister discipline of architectural criticism in Islamic studies, has to be rethought with historical self-consciousness and in the framework of a critical intellectual modernity. Intellectual modernity as modernity in architecture, however, ought not to be seen as a totalizing discourse, but as a perspective, as a set of tools of comprehension which unlock creativity and release the potential for a constructive dialogue with the community in its contemporary environment. But one must be careful not to disengage this discussion from the ground level at which architecture operates, the way in which it is generated in urban and rural contexts. And here it is worth remembering that architects work within the context of the historical experience of the physical and cultural environment of the people for whose needs they build.

Muslim architects, like many of their counterparts in the rest of the developing world, seem to carry a double burden. One is the burden of a past which is perhaps not yet clearly understood and which for ideological and other reasons is often mythologized or at the other extreme simply discarded. The other burden is a product of contemporary reality and professional training, both dominated by a Eurocentric perspective, where the primary experience of modernization and the architectural education to cope with it have emerged from the West. This double burden creates the condition of double jeopardy, because most of the contemporary experience of building takes place within limits imposed by the reality of the nation-state, not simply as a new boundary of social and political order, but also as the decision-maker and source of funding. Islam, of course, continues to persist in this new context, but the relationship of Islam becomes linked to the growth of nationalism and cultural identity. These relationships tend to vary among different nation-states, ranging from instances where Islam is increasingly dissociated from the national myth or elsewhere where it attains a symbiosis with nationalist aspirations. In the case of Indonesia, for example, a differentiated notion of religion acts as a source, and indeed a support for, a differentiated national culture.

Let me now go on to characterize the learning experiences that have come to us from the Indonesian context of our discussions. We have learned that Islam came to Indonesia peacefully and situated itself on a continuum, a continuum which had, among others, deep

Javanese roots. But along that continuum one found in subsequent phases of history, Hinduism, then Buddhism, and then Islam. I think what I have heard and seen leads me to suggest that instead of dealing with polarities and distinctions among traditions, what we might want to address is the issue of the generative ambience within which Islam finds itself, within which Muslims find themselves, where there is a conversation among many cultures. Out of these conversations has emerged the visual and spatial language reproduced in the various buildings and monuments that we have seen. One finds this in the early mosques that have integrated features drawn from Javanese, Hindu, and Buddhist traditions, or in extensions of space to encompass lifestyles which blend an Islamic ethic with ritual and human concerns drawn from past traditions to which that ethic is sympathetic and not in contradiction. That generative ambience has led to a convergence of various dialects. This is a new language, but the convergence of dialects manifests itself artistically and in an integrated manner. This language is not fixed because it is constantly evolving; it is changing and perhaps one of the most interesting lessons that we may have learned here is how Indonesia has creatively managed cultural and religious differences to permit the coexistence of faiths, traditions of building, and encouraged simultaneous conversations to proceed and interact. It is salutary to think that pluralism of this kind, as the negotiation and peaceful contestation of “difference”, may still be possible.

Complementing the experience of diversity in Indonesia is the new frontier of Islam, where Muslims are settling and growing in a relatively peaceful manner. This new frontier is Europe and North America. It may be appropriate for Muslims who are living there to look at the Indonesian cultural experience and to ask whether they too wish to situate themselves creatively along a continuum to which they can contribute their vision. But in doing so, Muslims need to be self-conscious and critically aware of the fact that they come to the West from different parts of the Muslim world, carrying their own separate memories of a visual and cultural past. The dilemma for Muslims who live in the West is whether they will allow those fragmented recollections to block their path towards an intellectual and cultural discourse with the West and retard a process of integration or respond by making their contribution along a cultural continuum. What we have learned is that architecture can cross borders. We have seen images that portray new spaces and buildings embodying fresh concerns, aspirations, and technologies. If buildings are to be extensions of a certain way of articulating space in Islam outside of an area that is no longer dominated by Islam, then why cannot that happen in Western contexts? Why cannot Muslims conceive of making a contribution to the evolving visual language of architecture in the West? There is nothing monolithic about current architectural form or practice in America or Europe. Why cannot contemporary Muslim concerns be situated within that continuum so that the search for architecture within the spirit of Islam is not limited to the Muslim world but is practised and shared

globally, enriching other cultures as Islam has done throughout its civilization and history? It is this possibility that could make the work of Muslim architects living in the West an exciting endeavour.

Among other issues concerning the role of buildings for Muslims in the Western environment is whether mosques in particular can embody the multiple needs and activities that Muslims engage in, or whether their purpose and use are to be restricted to ritual expressions of piety. For example, in Canada, the United States, France, and England, people do not simply gather to worship. They come to mosques so they can learn, socially interact, eat, celebrate, and even mourn. In rethinking mosque architecture and function, Muslims will also have to reconceive the design and purpose of such buildings and some of these may not be consistent with the memories they carry with them. Just as in the Indonesian experience where Muslims learned from and appropriated elements of Javanese and other local cultures and experiences, it may be appropriate for Muslims, as they think about new mosques and the future role and function of these buildings in the West, to learn from traditions that are already established there. The Christian and Jewish communities with their long experience, the new communities of Buddhists, Hindus, and others who have made homes in the West and changed the landscape of religious life and building, may indeed prove helpful in instructing Muslims of the challenges that lie ahead. In any case, the opportunity exists for Muslims to contribute to this diverse landscape and to find in it a distinctive and visually unique place.

**Future Directions.** Let me now try to speak about what we have learned with regard to some of the new directions that lie ahead. The creation of a new discourse and the architectural education and imagination to support it are taking place in a context of immense technological change, the emergence of needs unthought of in the past, the everyday effect of demographic change, and a growing concern with the environment and its erosion. The new set of relationships and orientations very often contrast with the past and may even be in conflict during a period of transition. One of the casual ties of the process is historical memory, which, when it leads back to several histories, may be invoked wrongly or for the wrong reasons. It is therefore worth remembering a distinction that Jaroslav Pelikan, a historian from Yale, makes between “tradition” and “traditionalism”. The first he regards as the living faith of the dead and the second as the dead faith of the living. Muslims today are not only in greater contact with each other, but they are in greater contact with everybody else. This has led to common aspirations to discover a shared architectural heritage at the same time as the discovery of new spaces and ways of building. Often a common style might emerge. We have heard references to a pan-Islamic style as one representative pattern that has emerged. This idea of a pan-Islamic style of architecture emerges as a result of cooperating and competing forms of local and regional Muslim architectural styles. Styles, however, can be imposed by states, and by states on other

states and other communities. Thus, one obvious product in contemporary Muslim society is a hotchpotch of styles that very often do not respond to the cultural or national needs of a community. However, in accepting this, one also accepts the dual dimension of plurality, which can be an enabling and positive concept but can also result, as has been pointed out, in bad architecture. But while this may give rise to a lot of bad buildings, it also leads to good buildings. The issue, however, of how to sustain the creation of better buildings remains and is significant, since it is such buildings that become markers for the sort of language that has been attempted at the seminar and which depends ultimately on the continuation of such meaningful dialogues across the Muslim world.

Finally, I think we have to remind ourselves of one of the most important lessons that we may have learned in the last four days: that the word “Islam” is a verbal noun. It is about acting and thinking; it is about engagement; about responding; and ultimately about equilibrating. If our conversations have hinted at some future directions, the hints are in a context that is still blurred. But we are in the midst of a thinking process and a thinking process is always a quest. It is a quest where our conversation is in dialogue with all of the realities that we have observed, not only in Indonesia, but in all parts of the world in which we live. In that sense, what we have done today may very well be an indication of the sort of future that can be envisioned architecturally and culturally for Muslims wherever they live.

## Farewell

*Syahrul Syarif*

Indonesian Institute of Architects

Without realizing it, we have been gathering for almost one whole week, deliberating, exchanging, and expressing our different views and convictions as intellectuals and socializing with each other as individuals. Now we have come to the inevitable of all beginnings, which is the time when we have to say goodbye.

As the official host of this distinguished gathering, I am sincerely most happy to have had you all here, and on behalf of the Indonesian Institute of Architects I would like to convey our deepest gratitude to His Highness the Aga Khan and the Aga Khan Award for entrusting us to be the host and local organizing committee of this seminar.

Our gratitude is also addressed to the Government of Indonesia, represented on this occasion by the Ministry of Religious Affairs that has so graciously consented to provide patronage and guidance in conducting this seminar. To His Excellency the Minister of Religious Affairs, as member of the Aga Khan Award, I do beg from Your Excellency forgiveness for any shortcomings and errors which we may have inadvertently committed during the preparations and during the seminar itself.

I would also like to extend my personal respect and gratitude to my colleagues: Adhi Moersid, Michael Sumariyanto, Adhy Thaher, Mrs. Lenny Tanod and her staff, and to the many others who have, behind the scenes, done their utmost in supporting the Indonesian Institute of Architects during this seminar.

Lastly, to all of you who have come from outside Yogyakarta and especially you who have come from abroad, I say *Selamat Jalan*; have a safe and pleasant journey back home, to your families and friends. May the Almighty and All-loving God be with us now and always.

## Islam and Indonesia

*His Excellency H. Munawir Sjadzali*

Minister of Religious Affairs, Republic of Indonesia

Once again it is indeed a great honour for Indonesia to be chosen as the venue of this seminar, the second to be held in this country. If one ever said that Islam is the most misunderstood religion, it is equally true to say that the religious outlook and the cultural life of the Indonesian Muslims are the least known and therefore the least comprehended by their co-religious brothers in the other parts of the Muslim world.

Last year, I had a guest, an American professor. He complained about what he found in the American academic world today. On the one side there is a group of scholars who are highly informed about Islam and the Muslim world but who know nothing about Indonesia. To them, the Muslim world with the Middle East as the heartland extends to the east only as far as Pakistan. On the other hand there is another group of scholars who are very familiar with Indonesia but who know little or nothing about Islam. That professor, being himself an outstanding scholar on Indonesia, is trying to erect a bridge to fill the gap.

In August 1985, an international seminar on the new approach to Islamic studies was held in Jakarta, sponsored jointly by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Indonesian Institute of Science. One of the conclusions of the seminar was that in the field of Islamic studies, Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, deserves to be treated as a separate entity.

Yes, we are Muslims, the same as our co-religious brothers and sisters in other parts of the world, but there are factors that make us different from them. Some of those factors might be historical, i.e., that Islam came to Indonesia not through a military conquest, but by peaceful means. For that reason, culturally and socially, we have never experienced a complete break with the past. The arrival of Islam as a newcomer did not necessarily destroy the other established cultures, and the interrelationship between the new and the old is very much coloured by peaceful and mutual accommodation and adaptation. In this picture, I would like to give just one small example. The architecture of our mosques, particularly those in Java, is not the same as the architecture of mosques in the Middle East. I hope that in the course of your seminar, one of the Indonesian participants has related to you the story of the construction of the Demak Mosque.

When the first Muslim Sultan of Java in Demak was constructing the first mosque, his father, who happened to be the last Hindu King of Majapahit, contributed to the construction of that house of God some building materials, including the four columns. This is a reflection both of the peaceful introduction of Islam and the harmonious co-existence of different cultures, which became a model to be followed by the Indonesians, Muslims, and non-Muslims in modern times.

May I relate to you another story. In one of the eastern parts of Indonesia there is a region by the name of Maluku. In that region, the tolerance between the adherents of various faiths has reached such a level that if a Muslim section of the community is building

a mosque, it is then exclusively the right of the Christian section to fix the roof of the mosque. On the other hand, if the Christian part of the community is building a church, nobody can question the right of the Muslim part to finish the floor of the church.

For that reason, my government highly welcomes the convening of your seminar in this country. I am full of confidence that in the last four days, the non-Indonesian participants have had an opportunity to learn much about Indonesian Muslims and to get acquainted with their culture.

In this connection, my heartfelt thanks and deep gratitude are due to His Highness the Aga Khan and the Aga Khan Award for Architecture who have made this seminar possible. I would not mind at all if in the near future, another seminar of this kind were to be held in this country.

## Closing Remarks

*His Highness the Aga Khan*

In making these closing remarks I would like to begin by thanking His Excellency the President of the Republic, His Excellency the Minister of Religious Affairs, all participants, and the Indonesian Institute of Architects, for the kindness and courtesy, the generosity and consideration, with which they have welcomed us to Indonesia.

It goes without saying that an institution such as the Award and a forum such as this can only be genuinely creative for the *ummah* and those concerned with our built environment, if they receive recognition of wise and mature leadership. And this is what we have received here in Indonesia and for that I express your thanks, the Award's, and my own thanks.

Obviously after four days of intense discussion I am not going to try and summarize what has been summarized already, but I would simply like to comment on the fact that the Award, as a matter of policy, does not bring to seminars issues that are simple. And if some of you may leave this evening with the feeling that these issues deserve more discussion of greater depth, please do not go away frustrated because the nature of the issues that we bring up for discussion at the seminars are issues that are ongoing. They deserve and need continual discussion by intellectuals, architects, thinkers, and others from within and outside the Islamic world. It is a process; it is not a one-time exercise. And I simply want to underline that at the beginning of these comments because I think it is an important process. The objective of the seminar was to try to identify some notions impacting building in the Islamic world. And we have looked at notions, we have discussed them, and I think that we have perhaps not exhausted them, but we have certainly come up with some that deserve further reflection.

We have discussed ritual, we have discussed spirituality, we have discussed aesthetic experience, we have discussed normatism, we have discussed societal ethic, and we have discussed humanism. All these are concepts, all these are notions, which are part of our everyday lives — they are part of the everyday lives of everyone who is building within and outside the Islamic culture. And in that sense, I think that this seminar, at least from my point of view, has been extremely helpful because probably the question we asked more often than anything else is: what is Islamic architecture? To try to find some clearly thought-out answers is not an easy exercise and yet I personally am convinced that we must continue to seek these solutions. And some of the concepts, some of the notions, we have discussed at this seminar clearly stem from the essence of Islam and deal with the future of Muslim communities and people who practise the faith of Islam both in the Islamic world and outside.

In these last remarks I would simply wish to widen the context of our thinking. I have often heard it said, and I think that it is an undercurrent of aspiration widely held in the Islamic world, that it will regain its position of universal recognition. But I think that if that is one of our concerns, we have to be honest about the fact that in order to achieve that, we have to attain political, economic, social, and cultural standards no lower than those of the industrialized



world. We will have to accept to be measured by their standards. And after having been measured by their standards, we will have to excel. In order to achieve that, I think we have to accept that it would be a long and demanding course, but I hope and pray that at least in the domain of the built environment, the forum of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture will assist everyone involved, in determining the signposts, or at least some of the signposts, which will help us to revive and revitalize one of the most important pillars of Islamic culture and tradition. Perhaps one day around this pillar will come up a multifaceted humanism to which Muslims and non-Muslims will contribute and which hopefully one day Muslims and non-Muslims will be able to stand up and admire.

I thank you for your presence and I ask you to continue to think about the issues that we have discussed and bring to bear upon them all your wisdom, your creativity, and your convictions.

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